

ICS Calendar Title: Charles Taylor and the Religious Imaginary

ICS Course Code: ICS 220507 F15

Instructor: Dr. Ronald Kuipers

Term and Year: Thursdays, 1:30-4:30 pm, Fall 2015

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1. Course Description

The notion of a “social imaginary”—the way people come to understand their social surroundings by way of images, stories, and legends—plays a key role in Charles Taylor’s thought, including his *magnum opus*, *A Secular Age*. In this intellectual *tour de force*, Taylor attempts to trace the historical development of Western secularism as we experience it today. In doing so, he challenges the “subtraction story” which he sees animating the social imaginary of today’s typical secularist. According to this story, the emergence of secularism in the West follows a linear trajectory, along which humanity slowly sheds the irrational accretions of myth, religion, and the sacred, in order to uncover a rational core of free thought and autonomous science, which may now flourish without the constraints of heteronomous religious authority. In challenging this story, Taylor offers an intriguing new understanding of Western secularism, as well as tantalizing suggestions concerning the continued social relevance a religious imaginary might have in “a secular age.” This seminar will be devoted to an in-depth study of this major work, which in its relatively brief life has already become a landmark text in both the philosophy of religion as well as secularization theory. Through this study, seminar participants will also consider what role Taylor’s Roman Catholic religious commitment plays in his thought, as well as the role a religiously-informed “social imaginary” might play in a pluralized global society that is deeply impacted by, but also largely at odds with, the particular social imaginary of Western modernity.

2. Reading Schedule

	Topic	Reading
Seminar 1	Introduction: What is a Social Imaginary Anyway?	“What is a ‘Social Imaginary?’” (Ch. 2 from <i>Modern Social Imaginaries</i>)
Seminar 2 75 pp.	<i>The Work of Reform: The Bulwarks of Belief</i>	Introduction—ch. 1, section 6 (pp. 1-75)
Seminar 3 67 pp.	<i>The Work of Reform: The Rise of a Disciplinary Society</i>	Ch. 1, section 7—ch. 2, section 5 (pp. 75-142)
Seminar 4 64 pp.	<i>The Work of Reform: The Great Disembedding, Modern Social Imaginaries</i>	Ch. 2, section 6—ch. 4, section 5 (pp. 142-207)
Seminar 5 62 pp.	<i>The Work of Reform: The Spectre of Idealism; The Turning Point: Providential Deism</i>	Ch. 4, section 6—ch. 6 (pp. 207-269)
Seminar 6 78 pp.	<i>The Turning Point: The Impersonal Order; The Nova Effect: The Malaises of Modernity, The Dark Abyss of Time</i>	Ch. 7—ch.9 (pp. 270-351)
Seminar 7 67 pp.	<i>The Nova Effect: The Expanding Universe of Unbelief, Nineteenth Century Trajectories</i>	Ch. 10—ch. 11 (pp. 352-419)
Seminar 8 49 pp.	<i>Narratives of Secularization: The Age of Mobilization</i>	Ch. 12 (pp. 423-472)
Seminar 9 62 pp.	<i>Narratives of Secularization: The Age of Authenticity, Religion Today</i>	Ch. 13—ch. 14 (pp. 473-535)
Seminar 10 61 pp.	<i>Conditions of Belief: The Immanent Frame</i>	Ch. 15—ch. 16, section 1 (pp. 539-600)
Seminar 11 75 pp.	<i>Conditions of Belief: Cross Pressures, Dilemmas 1</i>	Ch. 16.2—ch. 17 (pp. 600-675)
Seminar 12 51 pp.	<i>Conditions of Belief: Dilemmas 2, Unquiet Frontiers of Modernity</i>	Ch. 18—ch. 19 (pp. 676-727)
Seminar 13 48 pp.	<i>Conditions of Belief: Conversions, Appendix: The Many Stories; Wrap-Up.</i>	Ch. 20—Appendix (pp. 728-776)

3. Course Learning Goals

- a. To develop a critical understanding of a major figure in contemporary social philosophy and philosophy of language, in order to compose an essay on the social relevance of this thinker's thought that can be shared with a public audience.
- b. To think creatively and constructively about the role that a religious social imaginary plays/could play in shaping our understanding of contemporary moral and political issues, in order to be able to lead a public workshop on the application of such a social imaginary to concrete public problems.
- c. To gain knowledge of leading debates on the role religion plays and should play in society, in order to critically assess various positions on offer and to develop an original interpretation of one's own.

4. Description and Weighting of Elements to be Evaluated

- a) Total reading : 1250 pages total, including research for paper, of which approximately 60-70 pages per week is required to prepare for class
- b) In-seminar leadership: In addition to reading the assigned readings students are expected to do regular class presentations based on the readings.
- c) Description of course project: Term Paper: MA 3000-6000 words; Ph.D: 5000-8000 words.
- d) Description and weighting of elements to be evaluated:
 - i. class participation: 10% (TST-20%)
 - ii. in-seminar leadership: 30%
 - iii. class paper: paper: 60 % (TST-50%)

5. Required Readings

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 2747.8 .T39 2007]

6. Some Recommended Readings

Abbey, Ruth, ed. 2004. *Charles Taylor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Includes the essay "Taylor and Feminism: From Recognition of Identity to a Politics of the Good," by Melissa Orlie.) [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B 995 .T34 C47 2004]

Berger, Peter. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy*. New York: Doubleday.
[ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 60 .B42 1969a]

_____. 1992. *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity*. New York: Free Press.
[ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Knox College Library: BV 4637 .B38 1992]

Calhoun, Craig, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.). 2011. *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 2747.8 .R47 2011]

Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 60 .C375 1994]

Gutmann, Amy, ed. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: E 184 .A1 M84 1994]

Gutting, Gary. 1999. *Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Gutting here places Taylor's philosophical contribution alongside that of Richard Rorty and Alisdair MacIntyre). [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B 833 .G88 1999X]

Habermas, Jürgen. 2005. Faith and Knowledge. *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers*. Ed. Eduardo Mendieta. New York: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 60 .F68 2005]

Heft, James L., ed. 2005. *Believing Scholars: Ten Catholic Intellectuals*. New York: Fordham University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BX 1751.3 .B45 2005]

_____. 1999. *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Mirianist Award Lecture, with Responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BX 1751.2 .C3466 1999X]

- Hervieu-Léger, Danielle. 2000. *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. Trans. Simon Lee. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library: BT90 .H4713 2000]
- Kuipers, Ronald A. 2010. The New Atheism and the Spiritual Landscape of the West: Conversation with Charles Taylor. In *'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself: Theological Engagements with the New Atheism*. Ed. Stephen Long. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books: 120-28. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BT 1212 .G64 2010]
- Laitinen, Arto and Nicholas H. Smith, eds. 2002. *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Charles Taylor*. Helsinki: Societas Philosophica Fennica. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B 995 .T34 P37 2002]
- Lilla, Mark. 2007. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*. New York: Knopf. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 65 .P7 L55 2007X] (See his *New York Times Magazine* summary article, "The Politics of God" (August 19, 2007), at: <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F00612FB3D590C7A8DDDA10894DF404482>)
- Martin, David. 2005. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. London: Ashgate. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; KNOX College Library: BT83.7 .M33 2005]
- Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library: BL65 .P7 N67 2004; UTL e-resource: <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8158055>]
- Smith, James K.A. 2014. *How (not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR 100 .S533 2014]
- Smith, Nicholas H. 2002. *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals, and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B 995 .T34 S65 2002]
- Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley : University of California Press, c2000. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library: BL60 .S675 2000X ; UTL e-resource: <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8837036>]

- Stepan, Alfred and Charles Taylor (eds.). 2014. *Boundaries of Toleration*. New York: Columbia University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM 1271 .B68 2014]
- Taylor, Charles. 1983. *Social Theory as Practice*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library: H61 .T34 1983]
- _____. 1985. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD 450 .T265 1985]
- _____. 1985. *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library: B63 .T39 1985]
- _____. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD 450 .T266 1989]
- _____. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER: Robarts Library: BF637 .S4 T39 1992]
- _____. 1991. *The Malaise of Modernity*. Concord, ON: Anansi. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD 450 .T2654 1991]
- _____. 1997. *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B995 .T3 P47 1995X]
- _____. 2002. *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 53 .J363 T39 2002X]
- _____. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: H 61.15 .T39 2004X]
- Tully, James, ed. 1994. *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B 995 .T3 P48 1994]
- Warner, Michael, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Jonathan and Craig Calhoun. 2010. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL 2747.8 .V37 2010]

Weber, Max. 1946. Science as Vocation. In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Ed and Trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press. [1958 ed.: ICS Library Reserve Shelf: H 33 .W36]

_____. 1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR 115 .E3 W413]

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1971. *Remarks on Fraser's Golden Bough*. Ed. Rush Rhees. Nottinghamshire: Brynmill [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Robarts Library (1979 ed.): BL310 .F73 W5713 1979]

Other Resources:

The "Immanent Frame" Blog of the Social Science Resource Centre [<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>]

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Student Services as soon as possible.

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