

HSTR 471/RS 401: Religion and Empire in the Modern World

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Subject to change

Characteristically, religion and empire have been imagined as forces that the modern world comes to define itself in reaction against, with secularity supposedly triumphing over the former, and national self-determination over the latter. However, this seminar uncovers revealing dynamics of historical interdependence between religion and empire that persistently unfold, from the ancient world through the modern. If anything, our present era displays exemplars like United States, Russian, Chinese, and liberal internationalist promises to offer salvation from 21st century world disorder. Tracing from the pivotal moment of “swashbuckling” 14th century Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun’s articulation of universal patterns linking social solidarity with imperial destinies, we will traverse varying empires and their competing faiths, from “world religions” to “civilizing missions”. Far from least, we will consider how anticolonial struggle has helped produce new expressions of religious life.



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<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/07/26/chinas-belt-and-road-plans-are-to-be-welcomed-and-worried-about>