

HST 201: US History F19 (Escobar)

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Puritanism & Islam

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, October 12, 2019, 12:50 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Puritanism & Islam topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

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BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, which clearly describes the source and questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Puritanism & Islam

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America, a country of many backgrounds

by [Amanda Gonzales Minerva](#) - Saturday, October 12, 2019, 2:52 PM

Depending on what comes to mind when we think of Americans, Mason's findings may not be that shocking. We as Americans pride ourselves on an abundance of cultures, religions, ideologies, and backgrounds. It's a reality that has brought many of us to value and respect difference and diversity. The Puritans don't exactly have the best reputation when it comes to religious tolerance for example, believing only few could be saved while the rest were destined to be damned is a mentality people might find hard to identify with in an increasingly diversifying country.

There are people whose ancestors were already in America with their own ways of life when colonists arrived, as well as Africans who were forced from their homelands to serve as slaves for colonists. The descendants of these Americans, may have reverence or pride in events and people who represented their ancestors experience in America, not exactly the puritans. People have their own interpretation of historical events, significant moments to remember, and people to relate to or revere.

Understanding that there are so many types of religions in America, it would be wise to respect one another's choice to believe or not believe in whichever form of spirituality or religion. Egypt is different than America in the sense that 90% of the population is dominantly Muslim (*The World Factbook*), making it understandable why people who are mostly around others with the same religion would relate to the religious uniformity the puritans ultimately wanted. Without the separation of church and state in America, we would instigate national instability and conflict. Whose religion would reign? The framers of the constitution were very concerned with not allowing the few to be tyrannized by the majority, because they were themselves the few. Combining church and state in America would disregard our respect for diversity, and the state would no longer be representative of all it's people. Trading popular sovereignty for the sovereignty of a god that many either don't believe in or interpret in different ways would be disastrous. Hopefully we can learn from history, and understand that we can refrain from imposing our religious views on one another.

The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2019

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>

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Re: America, a country of many backgrounds

by [Connor Eden](#) - Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 5:32 PM

Saying Masons findings don't come at a shock seems a bit disingenuous, I didn't follow when you were mentioning the ethnic and cultural diversity of present day America because it doesn't seem to pertain to the discussion at hand, maybe you could clarify. The discussion we are having is about the contemporary views of American and Egyptian students when looking back at the Puritan settlers. So when simply looking through a religious lens we are not diverse at all in that regard as Mr.Escobar has said in class we are a predominantly christian (moreso protestant) nation from the time of settlers on. This fact is what's supposed to make the findings of Mason shocking. To put it simply the forebears of these Puritans ,who roughly 70% of which are still practicing christians (pew) are unable to grasp puritan ideals as well as students completely removed in a Islamic part of the world that is whats supposed to "shock" about the finding. Not that people don't care about Puritan history because they live in a diverse country

I agree when you say that the Muslim students are able to understand religious uniformaty better than Americans because religion dominates there culture in a part of the world where theocracy still exists. However this statement you made id like to touch on and i'm going to directly quote as not to mischaracterize what you said "Without the separation of church and state in America, we would

instigate national instability and conflict. Whose religion would reign?" As I had previously stated we are 70% christian that is almost a supermajority we would simply continue to be a majority christian nation and that number would likely increase creating a more homogenous society bound in faith. That is the opposite of what creates unrest and instability.

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Re: America, a country of many backgrounds

by [Eric Shoaf](#) - Friday, October 18, 2019, 2:18 PM

I'd like to touch on one aspect of your argument here. The part where you discuss how America is 70% Christian. While yes this is true, it's not taking into account the many subsets of Christianity that exist.



If you look closer you can see that Catholicism makes up 20.8% of the Christians in America. As Joe pointed out in class, Protestants and Catholics have different ideals and practices, such as the way their churches look. Protestants have more plain churches, and Catholics have more grandiose cathedrals. That aside, if we do some simple math we can see that not even Protestants make up a majority, coming in at 46.6% of the religious makeup of the United States.

With all this said, your point that the US is a majority Christian nation is true, but that doesn't mean it wouldn't lead to conflicts if we became a Christian nation. What would most likely happen is Protestants and Catholics would be butting heads to try and have their religion be on top.

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How Minorities Actually Function in a Society

by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, October 19, 2019, 10:20 PM

Disregarding your first paragraph and its idea that diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds would not lead to diverse religious backgrounds and viewpoints on religion's role. As well as the confusion on how different modern Christianity, and its interpretation and role in society, is from its practice nearly 400 years ago. I find that what you suggest at the end of the second paragraph is really not informed at all on history. You suggest that with a majority of 70% Christians if America were to theoretically combine church and state then people would simply become more homogeneous and peaceful. Frankly this seems like a ridiculous assumption based on any society you look at, particularly in the Middle East where religious differences with minorities of similar to even smaller size continues to lead to great conflict and has for thousands of years in nations where one particular religion was linked to state policy. What do you think would happen to the minority that was not Christian (and that is not even dividing Christian into the very different Catholic and Protestant beliefs), would they simply convert to a religion because the state was of that religion. This seems to disregard the fact that religious beliefs are often very strongly held, or in some cases like mine not held. If anything this state sponsored disregarding of a large portion of the population that is not Christian would likely lead to more conflict. Overall you seem to not understand how minorities function in and affect a society seemingly thinking they will naturally fizzle out and disappear for some reason.

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The Church Woven into the State & The Puritan-Islam Connection

by [Connor Eden](#) - Sunday, October 13, 2019, 10:57 AM

These findings regarding the students in Egypt having a much better understanding of the Puritan and Protestant influence on the shaping of the colonies and later the United States is deeply troubling. As much as the agnostic or atheist sect of the population would like to believe that we have total separation of church and state and that our history reflects that are dead wrong. The church is not separated from the state it is clearly woven into the fabric of the state. Ideas such as the Law of God, Equality of Man and God Given Rights clearly influenced the laws and ideals set forth by our founding fathers. Two famous quotes put my point best

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." John Quincy Adams (cath-ed.org)

"Religion and morality are the essential pillars of civil society." - George Washington (cath-ed.org)

I can empathize with Puritan cause to some extent, I am fond of having absolutes or principles in life that are sacred and can't be crossed and i'm not very fond of latin mass or "popery" as the Separatists would have put it. One of the quotes from John Winthrop in the Puritan video on the fellowship of man gives some insights as to why these Islamic students in Egypt could resonate more with these early Americans. "We must be knit together as one man, and in brotherly affection." (puritan video) The post enlightenment western world became obsessed with individualism and we can see it in our completely atomized culture today. These early Puritans obviously put less emphasis on the individual and his rights in favor of the good of the fellowship. Modern American culture lacks these themes of fellowship and putting the community before yourself, where contemporary Islamic culture from my understanding does not put as much emphasis on the individual and his needs.

The Pillars of Puritanism that would be important for modern American students to understand are faith being the utmost important, fellowship and caring for thy brother being a close second and thirdly discipline. The pew research poll influenced my analysis of this topic in that it is so glaringly obvious we are a religious country founded on religious principles. Obviously if you couldn't tell by now I am a religious person, I practice mainline Protestantism more specifically Presbyterianism so I do carry a pro-religion bias on the subject.

The last question posed whether religion will ever be totally removed from governmental influence is interesting because the instinctive answer is to say yes. As the Pew research shows we are becoming a more and more secular society with the number of agnostics and atheists rising each time the poll is taken. I believe this is a temporary trend however and that the cultural pendulum so to speak will begin swinging back away from the anti-christian cultural influx of the last 50 so years.

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Structure and morality in different forms

by [Amanda Gonzales Minerva](#) - Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 12:51 AM

While there is influence of church over state in America, particularly christian because of the high percentage in our country, that doesn't necessarily mean that church and state is the most effective approach to ensuring democracy and stability for everyone. We have all grown up differently, and we don't have to believe in the same ideas to understand morality, as is such in our daily lives while we interact with a variety of people. Some people may not find significance in the same things that I do, because throughout life we find our own version of truth and strength to get us through. Furthermore, we can see that the way we treat each other has very real impacts on its own. There are many ways that people express "brotherly affection," and concern for communities that are either affiliated or not affiliated with religious groups in America.

I respect what's important in your life such as fellowship and discipline, and I can say that many people share these values, they may just call it something different. Puritans are one representation of historical influence that people have the choice to identify with. I don't find any disappointment in people finding their own forms of inspiration. America is only going to continue to become more diverse, and with that we're going to need understand the importance of separating church and state to maintain peace between people, and to ensure a government of the people (not just a dominant religious group). This isn't to take away anyone's right to believe in a religion, it's to provide equal rights and to protect against discrimination.

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Religion and its Role in the United States



by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, October 19, 2019, 10:48 PM

While our laws may be often influenced by Christian morality and beliefs due to many of the people making laws in our nation being Christian this does not mean that we do not have a separation of church and state as you seem to suggest. It merely means that much of our morality is influenced or informed by religion. I can be, and am, Atheist and still believe in many ideas of morality that Christianity and other religions share. For example, the idea that you should treat others as you wish to be treated, you shouldn't steal from anyone, you shouldn't murder anyone, etc. In other words you don't need religion to have a moral compass and beliefs on morality.

There is not a anti-Christian culture in America there is simply more diversity so that being Christian is not the only option available to people. Having more people with different backgrounds does not mean society is automatically anti-Christian as you seem to think. Not being Christian does not make someone or something inherently anti-Christian, and the belief that it does seems incredibly reactionary and combative. On another note the separation of church and state is not merely a temporary cultural trend and its basic ideas if not exact wording has been in place in America for around 200 years, and has been confirmed legally multiple times in the intervening years. With the idea being attributed in part to Thomas Jefferson who was one of the founding fathers you mentioned earlier. The ones who supposedly proved that church is not in fact separated from state according to your argument. Overall you need to understand that being a country with religious people does not and should not make us a religious country, something our government and people started to figure out a couple hundred years ago, and you need to get a grasp on the concept of diversity and how it affects the country.

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How different Cultures shape people.

by [Trevor Mejia](#) - Sunday, October 13, 2019, 12:27 PM

When hearing the findings in the podcast, I'm not particularly concerned because as an art student a lot of my classes have been in Art history which has really helped shape how other cultures can help change how people view other cultures in the world. I've had many Middle Eastern friends while going to school in Eugene and noticed their level of religion and follow through is stronger than most twenty first century American students. However, that is just my own personal experiences.

I can agree with the puritan views, their main over arcing goals were simply to try to rid corruption from politics and gain religious freedom. Things that people today take for granted. Personally, I think the puritan's essential elements are That they wanted to restructure the Church of England (Angelical church) of Roman catholic styles as well as, purify Religion and politics of corruption, and finally came to America to gain religious freedom.

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Re: How different Cultures shape people.

by [Trevor Mejia](#) - Thursday, October 17, 2019, 4:30 PM

After reviewing "*Was the Great Awakening a Key to the American Revolution*," It had me thinking about some links between the 17th century Puritans and modern-day Muslims.

To expand on my previous post, I feel I would like to add how the Puritans and Muslims have more in common than I noticed originally. For starters, Muslims have a very close connection with god. The saying, "Allahu Akbar", Or "God is Great." are the words which every Muslim uses to pray with, but the same notion of "God Is great" is also shown in Puritan life. The Puritans were people of religion in which they adhered to the Bible and looked to God in their life. They also believed that God expected them to live strictly according to scripture. We see a very similar way of life with that of the Muslim religion.

For example, as part of the Muslim religion they pray 5 times a day, this is due to prayer being considered an essential part of their spirituality. Just as a person would eat multiple times a day they do the same with prayer, according to Islamic beliefs. Now although the Puritans didn't pray that intensely, they did however live very strictly by the teaching of the church and felt that it was truly their job to do Gods work of reforming the Angelical church.

I feel that Puritans express some of the same ideas as the Muslims. Some of the ideas include a sense of community, a contract with God, and the removal of material goods. Another example, In the Quran such things as materialism are stated as "Thinking that wealth will make him live forever, Nay but (in the life to come such as) he shall indeed be abandoned by crushing torment." To re-iterate, one item someone may hold as a materialistic value or item shall not remain with them forever. This is similar to the Puritans view as well when it comes to materialism. Although they believed that money was a gift from god, Puritans such as Richard Baxter said "Remember, that riches do make it harder for a man to be saved." Along with the verse from *Timothy 6:10* which states "Money is the root of all evil." In previous classes I have read Edmund Morgan's *The Puritan Dilemma*, and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* Which I found helped both express similar ideas to those of the Muslims. The Muslims have allowed me to create a better understanding of the Puritan ideology. The idea of a united community is a concept that both the Muslims and Puritans share, along with their stronger belief in God, are just a few examples of the many connections between their two religions.

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The Question of Minority Representation in a Majority-Ruled World

by [Luca Belsito](#) - Sunday, October 13, 2019, 7:05 PM

For my post, I used the audio file in the Puritanism & Islam folder, which was an interview of Professor Scott Casper. I'm intrigued by how the interviewer said that American students, even though they were religious, "casually dismissed religious establishments as unenlightened and barbaric antiquities" (Casper). Personally, I would not assume this would be the case, and if anything, I would think that religious students would be the ones who would most understand religious establishments, or a "blurring of the lines between church and state" (Casper). However, I admit, I am a bit frustrated at the ambiguity of Casper's information. I would have liked to know more about the context of the students he surveyed, such as where they were located, what their religious backgrounds were, and of course what sort of "survey" was given to get the responses that

Casper used in his podcast. To present such a strong argument as Casper does -- that the majority of American students, particularly religious ones -- all agree that religious establishments are "unenlightened" and "barbaric" requires sufficient backing, which I do not believe he presented in this interview.

Even if we were to take into account his comments at face value, I am also puzzled by the expectation of American students in the 21st century to maintain the same beliefs as the Puritans, considering there is such a huge time gap between the two groups. This assumption also doesn't take into account the fact that diverse groups of other cultures and ethnicities now make up the 21st century American group, so as a result, other religions also factor into this supposed group that the Professor surveyed (I would assume). Even though as seen from the Pew Religious Landscape Study, that in the entire US, Christianity and Catholicism remain the dominant religions, the professor would have had to specifically select for students that are Christian or Catholic, which cancels out a significant number of voices that are present in the America we know today. However, this can also lead into an interesting question -- Is the US government composed of people that are from this majority Christian/Catholic group? What does that pose for those that are not of this group but under this group's "power," so to speak? It's especially important to think of these questions in context of the current majority-Catholic Supreme Court Justices.

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the relationship between present Islamic students and Puritan history

by [Brontae Sodeman](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 1:13 PM

Religions often cross or are parallel to each other all around the globe. Finding that the Puritans, taking an old religion and purifying it, is more relatable to Muslim students make's sense due to the fact that Islam is also a very old and regulated/purified practice.

Americans tend to take a more contemporary view on separation of church and state because it's always been separated in their lifetimes but in Islamic countries, the lines are still blurred to this day. I think anyone who has been in the American education system would hear "Puritans" and have their eyes glaze over. We hear about them over and over from as far back as I can remember. It's something we're taught but Puritans are not present in our society so it inherently doesn't mean much to us. When a student has to make that same change like Muslims do in America, the Puritans are overall more relatable. The pew forum research shows how small the Muslim community is in comparison to the Christian community, which would make it more obvious for a minority to grasp the Puritan concept better. As a culture, we're veering away from religion to more agnostic means but people that are still immersed in old religion and loyal to it tend to be more sympathetic to Puritan history.

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Am I concerned with the lack of American student knowledge on the role of religion in our state?

by [Jordan Sage](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 2:27 PM

I believe that due to America's diversity of Christian sects, that this information isn't all too surprising. As the Pew Forum's "Religious Landscape Study" shows that there are over 41 different divergences of Christian beliefs in contemporary America. This info needs help for us understand the role of religion in these groups better, especially when it came to Colonial America, the Puritans had a more instilled communal trend, this is shown in our book on page 63, "...the New England town settled into a tight community that slowly became

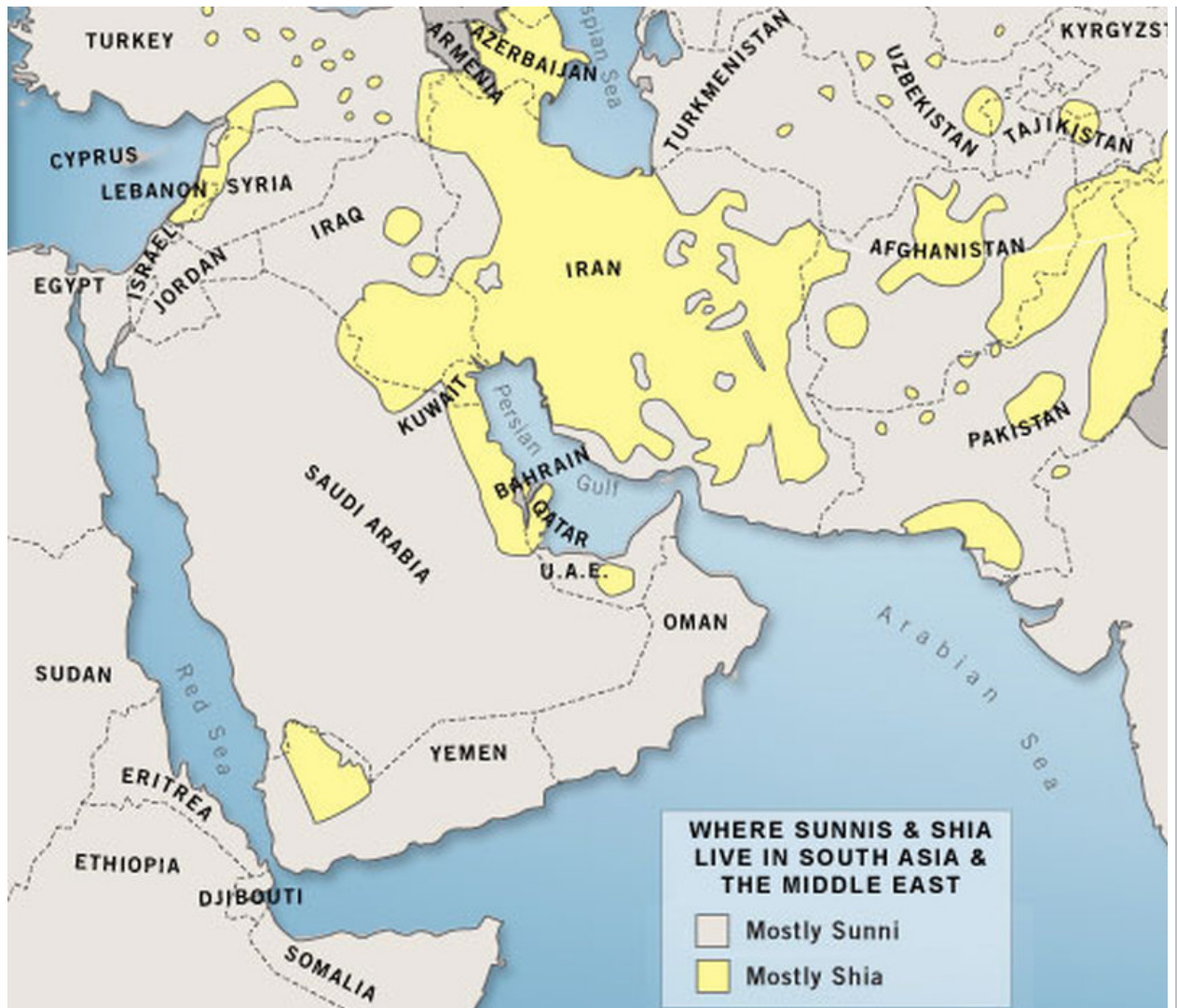
an intricate web of cousins. Once the settlers had formed a typical farming town, they grew reluctant to admit "strangers" to their midst." Tight communities around religious groups help keep the hold on the spread of beliefs to their children, not to mention their reluctance of outsiders entering their communities. Comparatively, Quakers had a similar family orientated base, but weren't as hierarchical as on page 73, *"...Quakers refused to doff their hats to social superiors. Hats symbolized the social hierarchy of Europe."* The Puritans had a higher hierarchical standard, as they were intensely patriarchal. While hierarchy for the Quakers was minimized to the best of their abilities. The Church of England was extremely common in Virginia, and the relationship between Puritans and the Church of England left much to be desired, as the Puritans want Purify the Church of England which left both sides on similar grounds as the Shia and Sunni debate for Islam. I believe due to the differences of the Christian sects in the United States, that the Puritan influence was not felt to the majority of Americans. Unlike the ability for Egyptian Muslims to understand the effects of the majority sect/religion on the state, which gave them a better view on how religion can be intertwined with the state. Egypt's dominant Islamic faction is Sunni with around 90% of Muslims being Sunni. Comparative to the United States' 70% Christian majority, with 20% being Catholic, 25% being Evangelical Protestant (with the largest sub-group being Baptist at 9.2%), Mainline Protestant at 14.7% (largest sub-group being Methodist at 3.9%), and Historically Black Protestant at 6.5% (largest sub-group Baptist at 4%). The diversity of America's religions make it more difficult to understand religious impact on the state, but Egypt can understand it better, as their dominant religion has an effective monopoly on relations between religion and the state.

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Re: Am I concerned with the lack of American student knowledge on the role of religion in our state?

by [Brontae Sodeman](#) - Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 4:12 PM

I didn't even think to take into account similar historic religious biases/relating the Puritans and the Church of England to the Sunni and Shia. Not knowing much about the differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims, I did some research. The Sunni and Shia debate consists of whether power is a birthright or someone must qualify for it. (<https://www.learnreligions.com/difference-between-shia-and-sunni-muslims-2003755>) The Puritans on the other hand were fleeing catholic influence that the Church of England had retained from it's catholic past. I think the relationship between the two could be the idea that there were separate communities for Puritans away from the Anglican. Looking at the map attached (<https://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east>), you can see the geographical relationship between Sunni and Shia. I lack a lot of knowledge on Muslim history though to continue, unfortunately.

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Re: Re: Am I concerned with the lack of American student knowledge on the role of religion in our state?

by [Jordan Sage](#) - Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 2:52 PM

Thank you for the expanded info! However, my rhetoric regarding the Shiite (Shia) vs Sunni debate was more on how their relations are currently, and I probably worded my sentence in a way that may have strayed from that. As there have been many conflicts in Middle Eastern regions regarding Sunni and Shiite Muslims. From Saddam Hussein in Iraq being a Sunni Muslim in a Shiite dominant state, and his anti-Sunni sentiment only caused more issues, there are also the Shiite 'cleansing' in Pakistan by Sunni groups. The Council on Foreign Relations goes in depth with this (<https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide#!/sunni-shia-divide>). I relate the current tensions between Sunnis and Shiites as they are very palpable similar to the issues we've seen between

Puritans and the Church of England. However, the relations regarding Puritans and the Church of England never (that I have seen) reached the levels as the Shiites and Sunnis, but the generality remains between the two.

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Can we obtain true separation of church and state? (evidence from video clip, puritan article, and from class.)

by [Eric Shoaf](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 5:02 PM

I myself am not religious, and I feel that in the modern day we can't obtain a true separation of church and state. However I feel that there are only a few ways that church will affect state. The main way that church will affect state is values. The Puritans had very strong religious values, some of which are very different from how we think today.

"The Puritans did not believe in democracy or freedom and liberty; nevertheless,

Puritanism and democracy do share some beliefs: both

1. respect the dignity of the individual, regardless of social status,
2. are egalitarian (for the Puritans salvation was dependent on individual merit or grace, not wealth, class, or ability),
3. stress the importance of education,
4. base government on the principle of contract or covenant (e.g., our Constitution and Bill of Rights),
5. are committed to principles rather than to individuals or institutions,
6. reject tyranny." (Introduction: The Puritans)

(For simplicity's sake I have labelled each value with a number so I can reference it.)

A lot of these values shared here are similar to values seen today. Many people think that education is important, and Americans think that all men are created equal, similar to value 1. But the way that this affects government is that politicians will base their decision making partly on their values. This is shown in the podcast when they talk about how the students held a mock Supreme Court judging with Egyptian students. The students decided that polygamy was lawful, based on the idea of religious freedom. However they found out that the Puritan judges chose to not allow polygamy, based on their values. (Audio clip, 1:19) (We know the judges were majority Puritan based on what Joe said in class on Thursday about the religious makeup of the Supreme Court.)

The other way religion affects our government is through religious symbols. Examples of this include: the phrase "under God" in our pledge of allegiance, "in god we trust" on our money, and the president being inaugurated by placing his hand on a bible.

With all this said, I think that we will never be able to obtain true separation of church and state, because of the moral values that guide decision making for some religious people. However we can get a lot closer by diversifying what politicians we elect, not electing all Puritans, as well as removing the religious symbols from our establishments.

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Re: Can we obtain true separation of church and state? (evidence from video clip, puritan article, and from class.)

by [Curtis Nordquist](#) - Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 4:26 PM

As we saw by the video on the Puritans, religion is one of the main bases for our country's beginnings. We put those words on our money and into our governing documents because that was the religion of the time and basis for moral guidance. The Puritans wanted to create a place that would survive based solely on their religion guiding them, which as the video implied, was the one thing that kept them together in the early rough stages of New England. However, that said, their religion equated worldly success to blessings from God, in a sense getting rewarded materially for what they were doing "right" spiritually and morally. This society began to fall apart when prosperity became more important than the fading religion over time. Church and state were combined in those times so that their communities would survive; the state taxes helped fund the church, which was more than just a place of worship, it WAS the people. Their drive for living morally and well, was the same drive that made them so successful in industry like lumber, fishing, and shipping trades. People succeeded when they had similar values. In the video about the Pilgrims and Massasoit, they began to prosper the more they integrated, yet that integration was making everyone nervous because the Indians had such a different faith.

When you talk about how we will never achieve a separation of church and state, it's mostly because religion was what our country was founded on; for many, what is "moral" is part of their religion, but for some morality doesn't involve religion as much as just a way of life that the majority of us agree on (like laws and such). The suggestion of "diversifying" by way of "removing the religious symbols from our establishments," is actually stripping out one type/part of a diverse populace. How can a population claim to be diverse when they strip away some parts of the society that built the country in the first place? I do agree that we the people should not elect "only Puritans," but we can't NOT elect *any* of them or we wouldn't be able to call ourselves "diverse." True diversity is having/accepting ALL types of people, including those with religion.

The struggle that America (the melting pot) has is that many are calling for diversification while telling others what they can/can't believe in, stripping away rights (such as freedom of religion) to pave the way for capital "D" diversity. Diversity is also about listening to the voices of the minority, not erasing those that don't think/feel/pray/etc. the same as anyone else. This is the very problem that the Pilgrims and Puritans had with trying to accept Indians and live in peace while taking their lands over and building a country for the crown of England.

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Re: Re: Can we obtain true separation of church and state? (evidence from video clip, puritan

**article, and from class.)**by [Eric Shoaf](#) - Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 9:46 PM

The religious symbols on our money and in our pledge were not, in fact, always there. According to the article linked below, the phrase "In God we trust" was added to our money during the Civil War, and was made our motto in 1955. The phrase "under God" was added to our pledge in the 1950's, (a movement which was started by Catholics by the way) as a means of being different from the Soviet atheists, as well as pushing back against the New Deal and Fair Deal. I'd encourage you to read the full article as it has much more information on the subject than I have time to explain here.

You also make the point that these religious aspects of our government make it diverse, I'd argue the opposite. I'm not opposed to having a wide range of religious backgrounds in our political leadership, I'm more against the idea of having these icons in our institutions. "In God We Trust" is our national motto. As an atheist I don't think that really represents me as an American. I'd be willing to bet many people of other non-Christian backgrounds would say the same. These kinds of institutions don't promote diversity, they promote Christianity, Puritan or not.

As we saw from the Pew statistics, Christianity is by far the majority in this country. Removing these religious symbols is not by any means taking away freedom of religion. In fact it's promoting it, by not broadcasting these Christian ideas.

<https://www.npr.org/2015/03/30/396365659/how-one-nation-didnt-become-under-god-until-the-50s-religious-revival>

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[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Removing Religious Symbols from Government and Diversity**by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, October 19, 2019, 11:15 PM

I think you misunderstand the idea that is being put forth. The common argument against removing religious symbols from government establishments is that if the government has a bias towards a certain religion by showing their symbols above other then this discourages diversity. It shows to a degree that the government considers that religion, in this case Christianity, the correct or more important religion. Removing these symbols would not discourage diversity but rather show people that any religion is free to practice without clear bias to one or another. You suggest that removing these symbols would supposedly show a bias towards lack of religion which I do not understand. It is not suggesting that symbols against religion are put up but merely that no symbols of a particular religion are displayed. The basis of this whole argument makes little to no sense to me. Like I said earlier this shows people that the government is not aimed towards one group of people or another.

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[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Puritanism & Islam: Glazed-over American Eyes**by [Curtis Nordquist](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 6:12 PM

As an American student, I can say that my eyes "glaze over" with most history when mentioned, Puritans included. I think this is the difference between American students (who deal with the issue of polygamy in Puritanism only in terms of historical studies) and the Egyptian students (who seemingly understand this from a different perspective, considering how much religion impacts their area/culture/studies -Casper podcast). For most American students, we "have to" sit through a history class that will cover a lot of dates/events that we are obligated to memorize. The Egyptian students are living in a era/location that deals with these religious issues all the time, so they are more involved in those issues (podcast). On the other hand, American students are only seeing those issues in America's rear-view mirror, as we "drive" through history in class, like a tour of the past. My concerns with this finding are relating to it in terms of naturalization; when someone comes to America, they have to learn our history and often do so better than most American students born into this history.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam: Glazed-over American Eyes

by [Ethan Dull](#) - Saturday, October 19, 2019, 9:54 PM

I particularly like your connection between the current era in Egypt and how it may aid students there to grasp the concept of puritanism better. I wish you had expanded on "these religious issues" when you mentioned that Egyptian students face a lot of the same religious issues that the puritans did. It would be compelling to talk about islamic influenced culture and how it differs from the more diverse America. For example, the second pillar of Islam requiring muslims to pray at five different set times a day. That could strengthen your stance by exemplifying how much more involved people of the Islamic faith are in an everyday setting. Not to say western Christians or any other religions don't pray five times a day, of course. My point being that it is required of muslims in the second pillar of Islam.

Overall I enjoyed hearing your stance and I think you have a great understanding of the findings discussed in the podcast.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by [Ethan Dull](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 9:44 PM

In my personal experience, not going to church growing up, I am naturally more susceptible to overlooking the significance of puritanism in New England. Students in Egypt and other locations in the Middle East are arguably more involved with religion growing up. But that's not what separates religious American students from religious Egyptian students. It is the cultural involvement that comes with their eastern religion(s).

Within the first few generations of Europeans in New England, they participated in covenant theology, which they intertwined in their everyday lives. For example, "Puritans gave it a novel social dimension by pairing each personal covenant with a communal counterpart". (text 56) Associating communal efforts with religion is arguably more prevalent in societies located in the Middle East. A major similarity between the Middle East and the first generations of New England is the unification of religion. In Egypt, for example, the dominant religion is Islam (with exception of a Christian minority). Although extremely different, New England in the

1600s and the middle east today share the similarity of a culture that is centered more around religion. Religion is more openly talked about in a day to day setting and praying five times a day is common with Sunni Muslims. Therefore, it is understandable that students in Egypt can generally grasp the concept of church and state better than western students.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by [Jay Elmore](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 9:59 PM

I am not deeply concerned with the finding that American students are less educated on Puritan beliefs and customs compared to students in Egypt because as the podcast speaker read, "Muslim students had far more in common with 17th century New England Puritans than did most of my 21st century American Students," which gives me reason to believe sole responsibility cannot be placed on the American educational system. Further evidence to point away from the school system, the podcast speaker went on to say that Muslim students seemed to gravitate towards Puritan discussions. In my learning history it has always been the subjects I enjoy and can relate to that I am left with a lasting recollection of, and that could simply be the case here.

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Does the fact that Egyptian students know more about the topic of Puritanism & Islam concern me? In what way?

by [Hunter Schultz](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 10:14 PM

On the topic of Puritanism/separation of church and state I feel like us students in America really don't have much of a background on the subject. Because so much that is taught in our country is biased and we as people of America don't like to look down on our country. Now it doesn't surprise me that Egyptian students know more about this subject then us Americans do just based off that they don't live here. Meaning that they probably have less biased teaching and the facts/teaching is gonna be straight forward. Also religion has to do a lot with teaching based on where you live so that effects students learning. As a stated fact from (PEW) it says 70% of the population they state are Christians in America. Religion affects peoples views heavily and if we are living in a country a large percentage of people are religious of some sorts that somewhat means there beliefs are a little altered. Me personally it does concern me a bit that us as Americans don't know our own history as well as foreigners do. But I feel like that can be said towards other countries as well because our understanding of lets say world war 2 is probably a lot more straight forward then Germanys would be just based off of Hitler and the Nazis. As well as could be said about the different understandings of the country North Korea either from our side or theirs.

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Proximity in Geography Versus Proximity in Culture



by [Warren Pavlat](#) - Monday, October 14, 2019, 11:59 PM

Undoubtedly, Puritanism was a (if not the) central pillar of life and culture in the early New England colonies. And while I wouldn't say I'm "concerned" with American students inability to relate to this notion of almost completely non-secular government in nascent America, it does press an intriguing query as to why this is the case, especially when contrasted to students in Cairo.

Although American students live on the very same continent and in some cases the same towns as the Puritan travelers, the notion of a government aloof from religion and guided by logic and reason is part of an entrenched cultural notion developed in and eventually transferred from our closest cultural cousins in western Europe. Meanwhile, though from a largely secularly governed country, Egypt's recent history and especially the history of its neighboring countries and is enveloped in theocracy and religious sway over government institutions. Some of the only pure theocracies left in the world are less than 100 miles from Egypt. When viewed from this perspective I feel it almost makes more sense for Egyptian students to have this line of divinely influenced government in their political radar.

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Do they work together as they did before?

by [Skylar Hoffman](#) - Thursday, October 17, 2019, 9:39 AM

I mean do they still work together? It seems to me that now a day they tend to be on two different pages except they would like to keep things neutral and keep their peace. Puritanism and Islam were trying to make things work together back in the beginning. They looked aside from their church and state and created their own community and tried to be one and Puritanism; now a days are called Christians, and the Islam they keep close but yet apart.

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Re: Today, can religion really be "removed" from its influence on governmental decisions, especially when the government is comprised of humans, many who are religious?

by [Hunter Schultz](#) - Friday, October 18, 2019, 12:04 AM

In today's world I think religion (or lack thereof) influences us humans in everything. I think people have moral reasons based off religious beliefs that affect their everyday choices. I know in the Christian/Catholic bible there are the ten commandments you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery and (ect). People live by the rules on a day to day basis which means it affects the way they choose to do things. Now as said in class about our supreme court there are 6 out of the 9 court justices that are Catholic meaning religion is apart of their lives affecting the way they think and act on choices (slide show). Also explained in class that back in 1600s religion affected all high power roles choices. So I think that religion can't be removed from its influence on our governmental decisions fully but in some ways it can. Really it's a hard question to answer because we don't fully know how people think? Now on the way I think and believe in things is definitely impacted by my religious beliefs and morals. The ways I make choices and

think things out are affected by my own beliefs but when it comes to the things I'm studying it depends. I think I'm not particularly biased but I'm definitely don't agree with the person in our history personal choices or self beliefs.

Questions:

Today, can religion really be "removed" from its influence on governmental decisions, especially when the government is comprised of humans, many who are religious?

If you feel so inclined to share, does your religion (or lack thereof) bias your study of these people

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by [Jay Elmore](#) - Friday, October 18, 2019, 1:18 PM

In the short Puritan video the Massachusetts Bay Colony is examined, where the most capable and well prepared colonists arrived. Many of these settlers were Separatists looking to get away from the Church of England. These people created a society built around religion and it is explained in many ways how the Puritans treated church in relation to government and society in Massachusetts during the video clip. At one point the speaker says, "Land, that had belonged to Indians, was handed out free of charge to town building groups. To keep title to it, the group had to build the town around a congregational church." This quote even further explains how closely the church was to the townspeople and establishes church as a central role in society. It also provides an example of the Church directly providing for the settlers. People in these towns also had to, "Agree to an assigned covenant to live in harmony and Christian brotherhood." This brotherhood mentality and closeness of community was not displayed throughout the colonies, and in fact led to tension and violence in other areas where the Church was less relied on. These colonies, which were commonly much less successful than Mass Bay, did not have the same sense of community. So although I'm not a believer in religion solving problems, in this case with religion acting as a community builder, was the Mass Bay colony so successful due to this religious togetherness?

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The United States problematic view of religion

by [Brandon Gericke](#) - Friday, October 18, 2019, 3:39 PM

I am definitely concerned with Professor Masons findings. Personally I would say that I am and have been an avid supporter of the separation of church and state. I am Native American and grew up with a Native American background. I was taught from a young age that the religions brought over to America by the Europeans, was bad and only brought suffering. However the more I learn in this class, I am realizing that

religion has and always will play a huge role in our government. I think that the ways I have been previously taught about religion and government, where religion is seen as a hindrance, is untruthful. Religion plays a major part in our government, so to pretend that we have a government devoid of religion, is foolish.

When discussing the Puritans and their role in The New World, I for some reason think of the movie that came out a few years ago called "The Witch". This movie portrays the Puritans as a very rough people who turn on their own, believe in witches, and allow their religion to dominate every aspect of their lives. My lack of religion, leads me to see the way they conduct their everyday lives, as foolish and kind of "doomed". I also think that their religion, submits women to a lesser role. Which by current standards, is completely unacceptable. However I am acknowledging that I am ignorant of the true nature of Puritan life, and am conforming to societies current views on religious culture.

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Understanding the Puritan Viewpoints and Logic

by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, October 19, 2019, 9:09 PM

I feel that I understand the Puritans experiences and their influence on American history though I cannot say that I relate to it at all personally. I find that looking at their basic beliefs and interpretations of their situation it's fairly easy to understand why they did what they did. For example, if you take into account their belief that if "sinners escaped public account, God's anger would be terrible" then their more controlling actions, such as mandatory church [attendance](#) and donations, are understandable logically (Textbook 61). So while I do not necessarily agree with their conclusions their logic based on what they believed is understandable. Another aspect of this was Ramean Logic which Puritan argument often relied on, and which itself relied on a concept of inner "right reason" and decided on a whether a concept or its opposite was true based on this reason (Introduction 4). This shows that Puritans had a defined logic system that informed their decisions to some extent. So something may be logical if not true necessarily using this system and their beliefs.

I believe that the critical parts of Puritanism that a well-educated American student should know and understand are Puritan beliefs on federal theology, the nature of humanity, and their relationship with the afterlife. Starting with the Puritans beliefs regarding federal or covenant theology I think that understanding that the bible was seen as a set of distinct and clear rules for life and conduct which was to be enforced by the government. This is important to show how core the religious ideals were to government ideas and laws (Introduction 3). Especially when Americans live in what is a non-religious nation even if many laws are informed on ideals from Christianity to some degree. The next aspect of Puritanism that I feel is critical to understand is their beliefs on human nature and the fall of man. They believed that after the fall of Adam and Eve human nature was corrupted, and thus people would naturally misinterpreted and disobey God and could not achieve eternal life anymore (Textbook 61). This mandated the strict application of right reason and following of the bible in order to direct oneself onto the correct path in life, and ultimately make it into the afterlife (Introduction 3). This is important to understand as nearly all aspects of Puritan life relied on the basic idea that humans could not be trusted without the strict guidance of the bible and those who were educated to decipher it. The final aspect of Puritanism that is important to understand is their relationship with the afterlife and attainment thereof. Essential Puritans believed that life should be dedicated to the afterlife, for example trying to profit too much from business would be punished (Introduction 5). This is

important so that you can understand their basic viewpoint that life is the pursuit of the afterlife giving you an understanding of why they were so strict in their enforcement of laws that held the community to a religious standard thus allowing everyone to make it to heaven (Textbook 61).

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