

SECULARISM DEFINITION WORLD HISTORY

SECULARISM DEFINITION WORLD HISTORY IS A CONCEPT THAT HAS SHAPED SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTS, AND CULTURES ACROSS CENTURIES. THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF SECULARISM'S DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, EXAMINING ITS ROOTS IN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT, ITS IMPACT ON WORLD HISTORY, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN SOCIETIES. READERS WILL DISCOVER HOW SECULARISM ORIGINATED, EVOLVED THROUGH PIVOTAL ERAS, AND BECAME A CORNERSTONE OF CONTEMPORARY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL RIGHTS. KEY TOPICS SUCH AS THE ENLIGHTENMENT, THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, AND THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF SECULAR IDEALS ARE COVERED IN DETAIL. THE ARTICLE ALSO DISCUSSES THE VARIATIONS OF SECULARISM ACROSS DIFFERENT CULTURES AND ANALYZES ITS CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE IN SHAPING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES. BY UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM WITHIN A WORLD HISTORICAL CONTEXT, READERS WILL GAIN INSIGHT INTO ITS IMPORTANCE AND THE DEBATES SURROUNDING ITS ROLE TODAY. DIVE IN TO UNCOVER THE MULTIFACETED STORY OF SECULARISM AND ITS ENDURING LEGACY IN WORLD HISTORY.

- DEFINITION AND CORE PRINCIPLES OF SECULARISM
- HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF SECULARISM
- SECULARISM IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES
- THE ENLIGHTENMENT ERA AND THE RISE OF SECULAR THOUGHT
- SECULARISM IN THE MODERN AGE
- GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECULARISM
- IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE
- CONTEMPORARY DEBATES AND CHALLENGES

DEFINITION AND CORE PRINCIPLES OF SECULARISM

SECULARISM, IN WORLD HISTORY, REFERS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS FROM GOVERNMENTAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS. AT ITS CORE, SECULARISM ADVOCATES FOR A SOCIETY WHERE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS DO NOT DICTATE POLITICAL DECISIONS, LAWS, OR PUBLIC POLICIES. THE DEFINITION OF SECULARISM HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME, ENCOMPASSING VARIOUS APPROACHES THAT RANGE FROM STRICT EXCLUSION OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE TO THE PROMOTION OF RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY BY THE STATE. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SECULARISM INCLUDE FREEDOM OF RELIGION, EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW REGARDLESS OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, AND THE PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AGAINST RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE. THESE CORE TENETS HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING MODERN DEMOCRACIES AND FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE DIVERSE BELIEFS CAN COEXIST PEACEFULLY.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF SECULARISM

THE ROOTS OF SECULARISM IN WORLD HISTORY CAN BE TRACED TO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS THAT QUESTIONED THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN GOVERNANCE. EARLY SECULAR THOUGHT EMERGED IN CIVILIZATIONS SUCH AS ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME, WHERE PHILOSOPHERS LIKE SOCRATES AND CICERO DEBATED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS, LAW, AND RELIGION. HOWEVER, THE FORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM AS A DISTINCT CONCEPT GAINED MOMENTUM MUCH LATER, PARTICULARLY DURING PERIODS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND SOCIAL UPEHAVAL. THE EMERGENCE OF HUMANISM IN THE RENAISSANCE AND THE RISE OF RATIONAL INQUIRY LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR SECULAR IDEOLOGIES THAT CHALLENGED TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

PHILOSOPHERS SUCH AS JOHN LOCKE, BARUCH SPINOZA, AND VOLTAIRE WERE PIVOTAL IN ARTICULATING THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR SECULARISM. THEIR WRITINGS EMPHASIZED REASON, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AND THE NEED FOR TOLERANCE IN SOCIETIES MARKED BY RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY. THESE THINKERS ARGUED FOR THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE TO ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENTS COULD FUNCTION IMPARTIALLY AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF ALL CITIZENS.

SECULARISM IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

WHILE SECULARISM AS A FORMAL DOCTRINE DID NOT EXIST IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES, ELEMENTS OF SECULAR THOUGHT WERE PRESENT IN VARIOUS CULTURAL AND LEGAL PRACTICES. IN ANCIENT INDIA, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MAURYAN EMPEROR ASHOKA PROMOTED RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE, REGARDLESS OF FAITH. SIMILARLY, ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN MEDIEVAL TIMES DEVELOPED CONCEPTS OF GOVERNANCE THAT SEPARATED LEGAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN CERTAIN CONTEXTS.

EARLY EXAMPLES OF SECULAR PRACTICES

- ROMAN LAW: EMPHASIZED CIVIC DUTIES OVER RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS.
- CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY: FOCUSED ON ETHICAL GOVERNANCE RATHER THAN DIVINE MANDATES.
- MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE: RECOGNIZED THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LAW IN ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.

THESE EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATE THE GRADUAL EMERGENCE OF SECULAR PRINCIPLES LONG BEFORE THE FORMALIZATION OF SECULARISM IN MODERN HISTORY.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT ERA AND THE RISE OF SECULAR THOUGHT

THE ENLIGHTENMENT WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE PERIOD FOR SECULARISM DEFINITION WORLD HISTORY. THINKERS SUCH AS THOMAS JEFFERSON, JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, AND DENIS DIDEROT CHAMPIONED THE SEPARATION OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY FROM GOVERNMENTAL POWER. THE ENLIGHTENMENT EMPHASIZED RATIONALITY, SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY, AND THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL, CHALLENGING THE DOMINANCE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN PUBLIC LIFE.

KEY ENLIGHTENMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT, THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND THE PROTECTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES BECAME CENTRAL TO POLITICAL DEBATES. MAJOR DOCUMENTS SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION AND THE FRENCH DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND CITIZEN ENSHRINED SECULAR PRINCIPLES, ESTABLISHING THE LEGAL BASIS FOR SECULAR GOVERNANCE AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS.

SECULARISM IN THE MODERN AGE

IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES, SECULARISM BECAME A DEFINING FEATURE OF MANY MODERN STATES. MOVEMENTS FOR SECULAR EDUCATION, LEGAL REFORMS, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SECULAR CONSTITUTIONS SPREAD ACROSS EUROPE, THE AMERICAS, AND OTHER REGIONS. THE RISE OF NATION-STATES AND THE SPREAD OF DEMOCRATIC IDEALS REINFORCED THE IMPORTANCE OF SECULARISM IN MANAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND PROTECTING MINORITY RIGHTS.

SECULARISM AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

THE FORMAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF SECULARISM IN WORLD HISTORY. IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES, CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS WERE ADOPTED TO PREVENT RELIGIOUS INTERFERENCE IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. THIS SEPARATION HAS ALLOWED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES WHERE INDIVIDUALS ARE FREE TO PRACTICE—OR REFRAIN FROM PRACTICING—ANY RELIGION.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECULARISM

SECULARISM HAS TAKEN DIVERSE FORMS ACROSS DIFFERENT REGIONS AND CULTURES. IN SOME COUNTRIES, SECULARISM IS ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION AND RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED, WHILE IN OTHERS, RELIGION CONTINUES TO PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN PUBLIC LIFE. UNDERSTANDING THESE VARIATIONS IS ESSENTIAL FOR A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF SECULARISM DEFINITION WORLD HISTORY.

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES

- FRANCE: LA[?] CIT[?] MODEL PROMOTES STRICT SEPARATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND STATE INSTITUTIONS.
- INDIA: SECULARISM GUARANTEES EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL RELIGIONS WITHIN A PLURALISTIC FRAMEWORK.
- TURKEY: STATE SECULARISM AIMS TO MODERNIZE SOCIETY WHILE REGULATING RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION.
- UNITED STATES: EMPHASIZES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENT NEUTRALITY TOWARD RELIGION.

THESE COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATE THE ADAPTABILITY OF SECULAR PRINCIPLES IN VARIOUS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS.

IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

SECULARISM HAS PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN SOCIETIES. BY PROMOTING THE SEPARATION OF RELIGIOUS AND GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY, SECULARISM HAS HELPED CREATE ENVIRONMENTS CONDUCIVE TO SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, SOCIAL REFORM, AND THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SECULAR GOVERNANCE FOSTERS EQUAL TREATMENT OF CITIZENS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE PUBLIC POLICIES.

BENEFITS OF SECULARISM

- PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND MINORITY RIGHTS
- PROMOTION OF SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT
- REDUCTION OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND SOCIAL DIVISION
- ENCOURAGEMENT OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION BASED ON SHARED VALUES

THESE BENEFITS UNDERSCORE WHY SECULARISM REMAINS A VITAL PRINCIPLE IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD HISTORY.

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES AND CHALLENGES

DESPITE ITS MANY ADVANTAGES, SECULARISM CONTINUES TO FACE CHALLENGES AND DEBATES IN THE MODERN ERA. ISSUES SUCH AS RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, MULTICULTURALISM, AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC POLICY RAISE COMPLEX QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LIMITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SECULAR STATES. SOME SOCIETIES GRAPPLE WITH BALANCING SECULAR PRINCIPLES WITH RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, WHILE OTHERS CONFRONT DEBATES OVER THE DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF SECULARISM IN RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES.

ONGOING ISSUES

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES OFTEN CENTER ON TOPICS SUCH AS THE DISPLAY OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC SPACES, THE FUNDING OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS, AND THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES. AS SOCIETIES BECOME MORE DIVERSE, THE DEFINITION AND PRACTICE OF SECULARISM MUST ADAPT TO NEW REALITIES, ENSURING THE CONTINUED PROTECTION OF FREEDOM, EQUALITY, AND SOCIAL HARMONY.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SECULARISM DEFINITION WORLD HISTORY

Q: WHAT IS THE BASIC DEFINITION OF SECULARISM IN WORLD HISTORY?

A: SECULARISM IN WORLD HISTORY REFERS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS FROM GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ENSURING FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL CITIZENS REGARDLESS OF FAITH.

Q: WHO WERE SOME INFLUENTIAL PHILOSOPHERS BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM?

A: INFLUENTIAL PHILOSOPHERS INCLUDE JOHN LOCKE, BARUCH SPINOZA, VOLTAIRE, AND JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, WHO ADVOCATED FOR REASON, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

Q: HOW DID THE ENLIGHTENMENT CONTRIBUTE TO THE RISE OF SECULARISM?

A: THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROMOTED RATIONALITY, SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY, AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, CHALLENGING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SECULAR GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SECULARISM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES?

A: FRANCE PRACTICES LAÏCITÉ, EMPHASIZING STRICT SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE; INDIA GUARANTEES EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL RELIGIONS; TURKEY REGULATES RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION THROUGH STATE SECULARISM; THE UNITED STATES UPHOLDS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENTAL NEUTRALITY.

Q: WHAT ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS OF SECULARISM FOR SOCIETY?

A: SECULARISM PROTECTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, PROMOTES SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, REDUCES RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, AND ENCOURAGES INCLUSIVE CIVIC PARTICIPATION BASED ON SHARED VALUES.

Q: WHAT CHALLENGES DOES SECULARISM FACE IN THE MODERN WORLD?

A: CHALLENGES INCLUDE RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, MULTICULTURALISM, DEBATES OVER RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC SPACES, AND BALANCING SECULAR PRINCIPLES WITH RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS.

Q: HOW IS SECULARISM DIFFERENT FROM ATHEISM?

A: SECULARISM CONCERNS THE SEPARATION OF RELIGION FROM GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, WHILE ATHEISM IS THE ABSENCE OF BELIEF IN DEITIES; SECULARISM DOES NOT REQUIRE INDIVIDUALS TO BE ATHEISTS.

Q: WHEN DID SECULARISM BECOME A FORMAL DOCTRINE IN HISTORY?

A: SECULARISM BECAME A FORMAL DOCTRINE DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND WAS ENSHRINED IN KEY LEGAL DOCUMENTS SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION AND THE FRENCH DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND CITIZEN.

Q: CAN SECULARISM COEXIST WITH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY?

A: YES, SECULARISM TYPICALLY FOSTERS ENVIRONMENTS WHERE DIVERSE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS COEXIST PEACEFULLY BY ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION FOR ALL FAITHS.

Q: WHY IS SECULARISM IMPORTANT IN MODERN DEMOCRACIES?

A: SECULARISM IS VITAL FOR PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, MAINTAINING IMPARTIAL GOVERNANCE, PROMOTING SOCIAL HARMONY, AND MANAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY WITHIN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES.

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Secularism Definition, World History: A Journey Through Time

Have you ever wondered about the complex relationship between religion and the state? The concept of secularism, often misunderstood and debated, plays a crucial role in shaping societies across the globe. This comprehensive guide delves into the secularism definition, world history, exploring its diverse manifestations throughout time and across various cultures. We'll unravel its evolution, examining key historical events and philosophical movements that have influenced its development, ultimately providing a nuanced understanding of this multifaceted concept.

What is Secularism? A Multifaceted Definition

Defining secularism isn't as straightforward as it might seem. At its core, secularism refers to the principle of separating religious institutions and religious beliefs from civil authority, state power, public education, and public life generally. This separation isn't necessarily about atheism or the suppression of religion; rather, it's about establishing a neutral public sphere where individuals of all faiths (or no faith) can coexist peacefully and equally under the law. However, the practical application of secularism varies drastically depending on cultural context and historical development.

Secularism in Ancient History: Seeds of Separation?

While the term "secularism" is relatively modern, the concepts it embodies have ancient roots. Consider the Roman Republic: although influenced by various religious beliefs, its legal and political systems largely operated independently of priestly authority. Similarly, some ancient Greek city-states exhibited a degree of separation between religious practices and governance, although the lines were often blurred. These historical examples demonstrate early attempts at distinguishing between religious and civic spheres, although they don't represent fully developed secular states in the modern sense.

The Rise of Secularism in the West: Enlightenment and Beyond

The Enlightenment era (17th and 18th centuries) marks a pivotal point in the development of secularism. Thinkers like John Locke championed the separation of church and state, arguing for individual liberties and religious tolerance. The American and French Revolutions, deeply influenced by Enlightenment ideals, enshrined principles of secular governance in their constitutions, though their implementations differed significantly. The American model favored a more nuanced approach, acknowledging religion's role in society while emphasizing religious freedom and the separation of church and state. The French model, in contrast, initially embraced a more aggressive stance, attempting to actively suppress religious influence in public life.

Secularism's Global Manifestations: Diverse Interpretations

Secularism's journey hasn't been confined to the West. Different cultures have grappled with the concept in their own unique ways. In India, secularism is enshrined in the constitution, recognizing the country's diverse religious landscape. However, the practical application of this secular ideal has been fraught with challenges, highlighting the complexities of implementing secular principles in a multi-religious society. Turkey, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, underwent a period of

secularization under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leading to significant changes in the country's political and social structure. However, the degree of secularism in Turkey has fluctuated over time, reflecting ongoing tensions between religious and secular forces.

Challenges and Criticisms of Secularism

Despite its widespread adoption, secularism faces numerous criticisms. Some argue that a complete separation of religion and state is impossible or undesirable, believing that religious values play a crucial role in shaping moral and social norms. Others critique secularism for potentially marginalizing religious communities or neglecting the spiritual needs of individuals. Further challenges arise from the varying interpretations of secularism itself, leading to conflicts over the appropriate balance between religious freedom and state neutrality.

The Future of Secularism: Adapting to a Changing World

In the 21st century, secularism continues to evolve, adapting to new challenges and global realities. The rise of religious extremism, alongside increased migration and globalization, necessitates a nuanced and adaptable approach to secular governance. Finding a balance between protecting religious freedom, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring state neutrality remains a key challenge for societies worldwide. The ongoing debates surrounding secularism underscore its enduring relevance and complexity.

Conclusion

The journey of secularism, from its ancient roots to its contemporary manifestations, reveals a complex and often contested history. Understanding its diverse interpretations across cultures and its ongoing challenges is crucial for navigating the intricate relationship between religion, state, and individual liberties in an increasingly interconnected world. The ongoing discussion surrounding secularism underscores its continuous relevance and its importance in shaping the future of societies globally.

FAQs:

1. Is secularism the same as atheism? No, secularism is not atheism. Secularism advocates for the separation of religion from the state, not necessarily the rejection of religion altogether. Atheists may support secularism, but many religious individuals also support a separation of church and state.

2. Can a secular state still have a state religion? No, a truly secular state does not have a state religion. The existence of a state religion inherently violates the principle of separation between religious institutions and the state.
3. How does secularism differ from religious pluralism? While related, secularism and religious pluralism are distinct concepts. Secularism focuses on the separation of religion from the state, while religious pluralism emphasizes the peaceful coexistence and tolerance of multiple religions within a society. A secular state can, and often does, embrace religious pluralism.
4. What are some examples of successful secular states? Many countries are considered to have successfully implemented secular principles, although the degree of success is often debated. Examples include Canada, many Western European nations, and parts of South America, all of which demonstrate varying approaches to the separation of church and state.
5. What are the potential downsides of a non-secular state? Non-secular states, where religion heavily influences the government, can lead to discrimination against religious minorities, restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, and the suppression of dissent. The potential for religious conflict and instability also increases significantly.

secularism definition world history: Secularism: A Very Short Introduction Andrew Copson, 2019-07-11 Until the modern period the integration of church (or other religion) and state (or political life) had been taken for granted. The political order was always tied to an official religion in Christian Europe, pre-Christian Europe, and in the Arabic world. But from the eighteenth century onwards, some European states began to set up their political order on a different basis. Not religion, but the rule of law through non-religious values embedded in constitutions became the foundation of some states - a movement we now call secularism. In others, a de facto secularism emerged as political values and civil and criminal law altered their professed foundation from a shared religion to a non-religious basis. Today secularism is an increasingly hot topic in public, political, and religious debate across the globe. It is embodied in the conflict between secular republics - from the US to India - and the challenges they face from resurgent religious identity politics; in the challenges faced by religious states like those of the Arab world from insurgent secularists; and in states like China where calls for freedom of belief are challenging a state imposed non-religious worldview. In this Very Short Introduction Andrew Copson tells the story of secularism, taking in momentous episodes in world history, such as the great transition of Europe from religious orthodoxy to pluralism, the global struggle for human rights and democracy, and the origins of modernity. He also considers the role of secularism when engaging with some of the most contentious political and legal issues of our time: 'blasphemy', 'apostasy', religious persecution, religious discrimination, religious schools, and freedom of belief and freedom of thought in a divided world. Previously published in hardback as *Secularism: Politics, Religion, and Freedom* ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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against Secularism -- Conceptions of Secularism -- Hard questions and new conflicts -- Afterword: the future of Secularism

secularism definition world history: *Humanism: A Very Short Introduction* Stephen Law, 2011-01-27 Religion is currently gaining a much higher profile. The number of faith schools is increasingly, and religious points of view are being aired more frequently in the media. As religion's profile rises, those who reject religion, including humanists, often find themselves misunderstood, and occasionally misrepresented. Stephen Law explores how humanism uses science and reason to make sense of the world, looking at how it encourages individual moral responsibility and shows that life can have meaning without religion. Challenging some of the common misconceptions, he seeks to dispute the claims that atheism and humanism are 'faith positions' and that without God there can be no morality and our lives are left without purpose. Looking at the history of humanism and its development as a philosophical alternative, he examines the arguments for and against the existence of God, and explores the role humanism plays in moral and secular societies, as well as in moral and religious education. Using humanism to determine the meaning of life, he shows that there is a positive alternative to traditional religious belief. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

secularism definition world history: *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* Jocelyn Maclure, Charles Taylor, 2011-10-24 Secularism: the definition of this word is as practical and urgent as income inequalities or the paths to sustainable development. In this wide-ranging analysis, Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor provide a clearly reasoned, articulate account of the two main principles of secularism—equal respect, and freedom of conscience—and its two operative modes—separation of Church (or mosque or temple) and State, and State neutrality vis-à-vis religions. But more crucially, they make the powerful argument that in our ever more religiously diverse, politically interconnected world, secularism, properly understood, may offer the only path to religious and philosophical freedom. Secularism and Freedom of Conscience grew out of a very real problem—Quebec's need for guidelines to balance the equal respect due to all citizens with the right to religious freedom. But the authors go further, rethinking secularism in light of other critical issues of our time. The relationship between religious beliefs and deeply-held secular convictions, the scope of the free exercise of religion, and the place of religion in the public sphere are aspects of the larger challenge Maclure and Taylor address: how to manage moral and religious diversity in a free society. Secularism, they show, is essential to any liberal democracy in which citizens adhere to a plurality of conceptions of what gives meaning and direction to human life. The working model the authors construct in this nuanced account is capacious enough to accommodate difference and freedom of conscience, while holding out hope for a world in which diversity no longer divides us.

secularism definition world history: *Formations of the Secular* Talal Asad, 2003-02-03 "A dark but brilliantly original work . . . one of the most important books on religion and the modern in recent years." —H-Net Reviews Opening with the provocative query "what might an anthropology of the secular look like?" this book explores the concepts, practices, and political formations of secularism, with emphasis on the major historical shifts that have shaped secular sensibilities and attitudes in the modern West and the Middle East. Talal Asad proceeds to dismantle commonly held assumptions about the secular and the terrain it allegedly covers. He argues that while anthropologists have oriented themselves to the study of the "strangeness of the non-European world" and to what are seen as non-rational dimensions of social life (things like myth, taboo, and religion), the modern and the secular have not been adequately examined. The conclusion is that the secular cannot be viewed as a successor to religion, or be seen as on the side of the rational. It is a category with a multi-layered history, related to major premises of modernity, democracy, and the concept of human rights. This book will appeal to anthropologists, historians, religious studies scholars, as well as scholars working on modernity. "A difficult if stunningly eloquent book, a

response both elusive and forthright to the many shelves of 'books on terrorism' which this country's trade publishers are rushing into print." —Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature "This wonderfully illuminating book should be read alongside the author's *Genealogies of Religion*." —Religion "One of the most interesting scholars of religious writing today." —Christian Scholar's Review "Asad's brilliant study remains a defining piece of intellectual and scholarly contribution for all of those interested in exploring the religious and the secular in the modern era." —The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences

secularism definition world history: *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* Saba Mahmood, 2015-11-03 How secular governance in the Middle East is making life worse—not better—for religious minorities The plight of religious minorities in the Middle East is often attributed to the failure of secularism to take root in the region. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* challenges this assessment by examining four cornerstones of secularism—political and civil equality, minority rights, religious freedom, and the legal separation of private and public domains. Drawing on her extensive fieldwork in Egypt with Coptic Orthodox Christians and Bahais—religious minorities in a predominantly Muslim country—Saba Mahmood shows how modern secular governance has exacerbated religious tensions and inequalities rather than reduced them. Tracing the historical career of secular legal concepts in the colonial and postcolonial Middle East, she explores how contradictions at the very heart of political secularism have aggravated and amplified existing forms of Islamic hierarchy, bringing minority relations in Egypt to a new historical impasse. Through a close examination of Egyptian court cases and constitutional debates about minority rights, conflicts around family law, and controversies over freedom of expression, Mahmood invites us to reflect on the entwined histories of secularism in the Middle East and Europe. A provocative work of scholarship, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* challenges us to rethink the promise and limits of the secular ideal of religious equality.

secularism definition world history: *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism* Étienne Balibar, 2018-06-19 What is the relationship between cosmopolitanism and secularism—the worldwide and the worldly? While cosmopolitan politics may seem inherently secular, existing forms of secularism risk undermining the universality of cosmopolitanism because they privilege the European tradition over all others and transform particular historical norms into enunciations of truth, valid for all cultures and all epochs. In this book, the noted philosopher Étienne Balibar explores the tensions lurking at this troubled nexus in order to advance a truly democratic and emancipatory cosmopolitanism, which requires a secularization of secularism itself. Balibar argues for the idea of the universal against its particular dominant institutions. He questions the assumptions that underlie popular ideas of secularism and religion and outlines the importance of a new critique for the contemporary world. Balibar holds that conflicts between religious and secular discourses need to be reframed from a point of view that takes into account the cultural hybridization, migration and mobility, and transformation of borders that have reshaped the postcolonial age. Among the topics discussed are the uses and misuses of the category of religion and the religious, the paradoxical genealogy of monotheism, French *laïcité*'s identitarian turn, and the implications of the responses to the Charlie Hebdo attacks for an extended definition of free speech. Going beyond circumscribed notions of religion and the public sphere, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism* is a profound rethinking of identity and difference that seeks to make room for a renewed political imagination.

secularism definition world history: *The Post-secular in Question* Philip Gorski, 2012-03-12 This collection of original essays by leading academics represents an interdisciplinary intervention in the continuing and ever-transforming discussion of the role of religion and secularism in today's world. Foregrounding the most urgent and compelling questions raised by the place of religion in the social sciences, past and present, *The Post-Secular in Question* restores religion to a more central place in social scientific thinking about the world, helping to move scholarship 'beyond unbelief.'--book jacket.

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secular" is constituted and understood, and how new understandings of secularism and religion shape analytic perspectives in the social sciences, politics, and international affairs.

secularism definition world history: Sex and Secularism Joan Wallach Scott, 2019-11-12 Drawing on a wealth of scholarship by second-wave feminists and historians of religion, race, and colonialism, Scott shows that the gender equality invoked today as a fundamental and enduring principle was not originally associated with the term secularism when it first entered the lexicon in the nineteenth century. In fact, the inequality of the sexes was fundamental to the articulation of the separation of church and state that inaugurated Western modernity. Scott points out that Western nation-states imposed a new order of women's subordination, assigning them to a feminized familial sphere meant to complement the rational masculine realms of politics and economics. It was not until the question of Islam arose in the late twentieth century that gender equality became a primary feature of the discourse of secularism-- Publisher's description

secularism definition world history: The Sacrality of the Secular Bradley B. Onishi, 2018-04-24 Through a bold and historically rooted vision for the future of philosophy of religion, *The Sacrality of the Secular* maps new and compelling possibilities for a nonsecularist secularity. In recent decades, philosophers in the continental tradition have taken a notable interest in the return of religion, a departure from the supposed hegemony of the secular age that began with the Enlightenment. At the same time, anthropologists and sociologists have begun to reject the once-dominant secularization thesis, which both prescribed and described the demise of religion in modern societies. In *The Sacrality of the Secular*, Bradley B. Onishi reconsiders the role of religion at a time when secularity is more tenuous than it might seem. He demonstrates that philosophy's entanglement with religion led, perhaps counterintuitively, to vibrant reconceptions of the secular well before the unraveling of the secularization thesis or the turn to religion. Through rich readings of Heidegger, Bataille, Weber, and others, Onishi rethinks what philosophy can contribute to our understanding of religion and the wider social and cultural world.

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secularism definition world history: *Religion, Secularism, and Constitutional Democracy* Jean L. Cohen, Cécile Laborde, 2015-12-22 Polarization between political religionists and militant secularists on both sides of the Atlantic is on the rise. Critically engaging with traditional secularism and religious accommodationism, this collection introduces a constitutional secularism that robustly meets contemporary challenges. It identifies which connections between religion and the state are compatible with the liberal, republican, and democratic principles of constitutional democracy and assesses the success of their implementation in the birthplace of political secularism: the United States and Western Europe. Approaching this issue from philosophical, legal, historical, political, and sociological perspectives, the contributors wage a thorough defense of their project's theoretical and institutional legitimacy. Their work brings fresh insight to debates over the balance of human rights and religious freedom, the proper definition of a nonestablishment norm, and the relationship between sovereignty and legal pluralism. They discuss the genealogy of and tensions involving international legal rights to religious freedom, religious symbols in public spaces, religious arguments in public debates, the jurisdiction of religious authorities in personal law, and the dilemmas of religious accommodation in national constitutions and public policy when it violates international human rights agreements or liberal-democratic principles. If we profoundly rethink the concepts of religion and secularism, these thinkers argue, a principled adjudication of competing claims becomes possible.

secularism definition world history: The Joy of Secularism George Levine, 2011-02-22 This book provides a balanced and thoughtful approach for understanding an enlightened, sympathetic, and relevant secularism for our lives today. Bringing together distinguished historians, philosophers, scientists, and writers, this book shows that secularism is not a mere denial of religion.

secularism definition world history: Ecodefense Dave Foreman, Bill Haywood, 1987

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Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 2009-01-10 Conflicts involving religion have returned to the forefront of international relations. And yet political scientists and policymakers have continued to assume that religion has long been privatized in the West. This secularist assumption ignores the contestation surrounding the category of the secular in international politics. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* shows why this thinking is flawed, and provides a powerful alternative. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argues that secularist divisions between religion and politics are not fixed, as commonly assumed, but socially and historically constructed. Examining the philosophical and historical legacy of the secularist traditions that shape European and American approaches to global politics, she shows why this matters for contemporary international relations, and in particular for two critical relationships: the United States and Iran, and the European Union and Turkey. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* develops a new approach to religion and international relations that challenges realist, liberal, and constructivist assumptions that religion has been excluded from politics in the West. The first book to consider secularism as a form of political authority in its own right, it describes two forms of secularism and their far-reaching global consequences.

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secularism definition world history: After Secular Law Winnifred Sullivan, Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, 2011-08-29 Bringing together scholars with a variety of perspectives and orientations, this work examines the interconnections between law and religion and the unexpected histories and anthropologies of legal secularism in a globalizing modernity.

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secularism definition world history: The Church of Saint Thomas Paine Leigh Eric Schmidt, 2021-11-02 The forgotten story of the nineteenth-century freethinkers and twentieth-century humanists who tried to build their own secular religion In The Church of Saint Thomas Paine, Leigh Eric Schmidt tells the surprising story of how freethinking liberals in nineteenth-century America promoted a secular religion of humanity centered on the deistic revolutionary Thomas Paine (1737–1809) and how their descendants eventually became embroiled in the culture wars of the late twentieth century. After Paine's remains were stolen from his grave in

New Rochelle, New York, and shipped to England in 1819, the reverence of his American disciples took a material turn in a long search for his relics. Paine's birthday was always a red-letter day for these believers in democratic cosmopolitanism and philanthropic benevolence, but they expanded their program to include a broader array of rites and ceremonies, particularly funerals free of Christian supervision. They also worked to establish their own churches and congregations in which to practice their religion of secularism. All of these activities raised serious questions about the very definition of religion and whether it included nontheistic fellowships and humanistic associations—a dispute that erupted again in the second half of the twentieth century. As right-wing Christians came to see secular humanism as the most dangerous religion imaginable, small communities of religious humanists, the heirs of Paine's followers, were swept up in new battles about religion's public contours and secularism's moral perils. An engrossing account of an important but little-known chapter in American history, *The Church of Saint Thomas Paine* reveals why the lines between religion and secularism are often much blurrier than we imagine.

secularism definition world history: *The European Court of Human Rights and the Freedom of Religion or Belief* Jeroen Temperman, T. Jeremy Gunn, Malcolm D. Evans, 2019-01-04 As the tensions involving religion and society increase, the European Court of Human Rights and the Freedom of Religion or Belief is the first systematic analysis of the first twenty-five years of the European Court's religion jurisprudence. The Court is one of the most significant institutions confronting the interactions among states, religious groups, minorities, and dissenters. In the 25 years since its first religion case, *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, the Court has inserted itself squarely into the international human rights debate regarding the freedom of religion or belief. The authors demonstrate the positive contributions and the significant flaws of the Court's jurisprudence involving religion, society, and secularism.

secularism definition world history: *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism* Phil Zuckerman, John R. Shook, 2017 As recent headlines reveal, conflicts and debates around the world increasingly involve secularism. National borders and traditional religions cannot keep people in tidy boxes as political struggles, doctrinal divergences, and demographic trends are sweeping across regions and entire continents. And secularity is increasing in society, with a growing number of people in many regions having no religious affiliation or lacking interest in religion. Simultaneously, there is a resurgence of religious participation in the politics of many countries. How might these diverse phenomena be better understood? Long-reigning theories about the pace of secularization and ideal church-state relations are under invigorated scrutiny by scholars studying secularism with new questions, better data, and fresh perspectives. *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism* offers a wide-ranging and in-depth examination of this global conversation, bringing together the views of an international collection of prominent experts in their respective fields. This is the essential volume for comprehending the core issues and methodological approaches to the demographics and sociology of secularity; the history and variety of political secularisms; the comparison of constitutional secularisms across many countries from America to Asia; the key problems now convulsing church-state relations; the intersections of liberalism, multiculturalism, and religion; the latest psychological research into secular lives and lifestyles; and the naturalistic and humanistic worldviews available to nonreligious people.

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the assumptions and resources internal to secular conceptions of critique that help or hinder our understanding of one of the most pressing conflicts of our times? Taking as their point of departure the question of whether critique belongs exclusively to forms of liberal democracy that define themselves in opposition to religion, these authors consider the case of the “Danish cartoon controversy” of 2005. They offer accounts of reading, understanding, and critique for offering a way to rethink conventional oppositions between free speech and religious belief, judgment and violence, reason and prejudice, rationality and embodied life. The book, first published in 2009, has been updated for the present edition with a new Preface by the authors.

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secularism definition world history: *State And Secularism: Perspectives From Asia* Chin Liew Ten, Michael Siam-heng Heng, 2010-02-03 The concept of a secular state is important in many parts of Asia and how this is resolved has important implications for the social, economic and political development of various Asian countries. Unfortunately, problems of the secular state have all along been studied based on the historical experience of state formation in Europe, with little (or no) input from the Asian perspective. This book will for the very first time, present mainly Asian perspectives, while drawing on Western experience as well. Conceptual issues are discussed together with detailed accounts on how different countries and traditions understand and seek to implement the ideas of a secular state.

secularism definition world history: *State Neutrality* Kerry O'Halloran, 2021-01-21

O'Halloran provides a comparative evaluation of contemporary law as it relates to religion in six developed nations.

secularism definition world history: *American Judaism* Jonathan D. Sarna, 2019-06-25

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2008-03-11 A collection that challenges the binary conception of conservative religion versus progressive secularism by highlighting the existence of multiple secularisms.

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Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Craig J. Calhoun, 2013-03-04 ÒWhat does it mean to say that we live in a secular age?Ó This apparently simple question opens into the massive, provocative, and complex *A Secular Age*, where Charles Taylor positions secularism as a defining feature of the modern world, not the mere absence of religion, and casts light on the experience of transcendence that scientific explanations of the world tend to neglect. In *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, a prominent and varied group of scholars chart the conversations in which *A Secular Age* intervenes and address wider questions of secularism and secularity. The distinguished contributors include Robert Bellah, Jos  Casanova, Nil fer G le, William E. Connolly, Wendy Brown, Simon During, Colin Jager, Jon Butler, Jonathan Sheehan, Akeel Bilgrami, John Milbank, and Saba Mahmood. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* succeeds in conveying to readers the complexity of secularism while serving as an invaluable guide to a landmark book.

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that a return to a more secular America will promote religious diversity and freedom, and help eliminate the widening divide between religious conservatives and staunch atheists.

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