

Secularism Definition World History



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.

secularism definition world history: A Secular Age Charles Taylor, 2018-09-17 The place of religion in society has changed profoundly in the last few centuries, particularly in the West. In what will be a defining book for our time, Taylor takes up the question of what these changes mean, and what, precisely, happens when a society becomes one in which faith is only one human possibility among others.

secularism definition world history: Secularism Andrew Copson, 2017 What is secularism? -- Secularism in Western societies -- Secularism diversifies -- The case for Secularism -- The case 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.

secularism definition world history: *Rethinking Secularism* Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 2011-08-25 This collection of essays examines how "the 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.

secularism definition world history: *The Principles of Secularism Illustrated ...* George Jacob Holyoake, 1871

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

secularism definition world history: *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* 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.

secularism definition world history: *The Monkey Wrench Gang* Edward Abbey, 2011-08-19 A motley crew of saboteurs wreaks havoc on the corporations destroying America's Western

wilderness in this “wildly funny, infinitely wise” classic (The Houston Chronicle). When George Washington Hayduke III returns home from war in the jungles of Southeast Asia, he finds the unspoiled West he once knew has been transformed. The pristine lands and waterways are being strip mined, dammed up, and paved over by greedy government hacks and their corrupt corporate coconspirators. And the manic, beer-guzzling, rabidly antisocial ex-Green Beret isn’t just getting mad. Hayduke plans to get even. Together with a radical feminist from the Bronx; a wealthy, billboard-torching libertarian MD; and a disgraced Mormon polygamist, Hayduke’s ready to stick it to the Man in the most creative ways imaginable. By the time they’re done, there won’t be a bridge left standing, a dam unblown, or a bulldozer unmolested from Arizona to Utah. Edward Abbey’s most popular novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* is an outrageous romp with ultra-serious undertones that is as relevant today as it was in the early days of the environmental movement. The author who Larry McMurtry (Lonesome Dove) once dubbed “The Thoreau of the American West” has written a true comedic classic with brains, heart, and soul that more than justifies the call from the Los Angeles Times Book Review that we should all “praise the earth for Edward Abbey!” “Mixes comedy and chaos with enough chase sequences to leave you hungering for more.”—The San Francisco Chronicle

secularism definition world history: *Secularism in Antebellum America* John Lardas Modern, 2011-11-11 Ghosts. Railroads. Sing Sing. Sex machines. These are just a few of the phenomena that appear in John Lardas Modern’s pioneering account of religion and society in nineteenth-century America. This book uncovers surprising connections between secular ideology and the rise of technologies that opened up new ways of being religious. Exploring the eruptions of religion in New York’s penny presses, the budding fields of anthropology and phrenology, and *Moby-Dick*, Modern challenges the strict separation between the religious and the secular that remains integral to discussions about religion today. Modern frames his study around the dread, wonder, paranoia, and manic confidence of being haunted, arguing that experiences and explanations of enchantment fueled secularism’s emergence. The awareness of spectral energies coincided with attempts to tame the unruly fruits of secularism—in the cultivation of a spiritual self among Unitarians, for instance, or in John Murray Spear’s erotic longings for a perpetual motion machine. Combining rigorous theoretical inquiry with beguiling historical arcana, Modern unsettles long-held views of religion and the methods of narrating its past.

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.

secularism definition world history: *The Secular Enlightenment* Margaret Jacob, 2021-04-20 Provides a panoramic account of the radical ways that life began to change for ordinary people in the age of Locke, Voltaire, and Rousseau. In this book, familiar Enlightenment figures share places with voices that have remained largely unheard until now, from freethinkers and freemasons to French materialists, anticlerical Catholics, pantheists, pornographers, readers, and travelers. Jacob reveals how this newly secular outlook was not a wholesale rejection of Christianity but rather a new mental space in which to encounter the world on its own terms. She takes readers from London and Amsterdam to Berlin, Vienna, Turin, and Naples, drawing on rare archival materials to show how ideas central to the emergence of secular democracy touched all facets of daily life. Jacob demonstrates how secular values and pursuits took hold of eighteenth-century Europe, spilled into the American colonies, and left their lasting imprint on the Western world for generations to come. --Adapted from publisher description.

secularism definition world history: *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* Akeel Bilgrami, 2014-04-21 In a rigorous exploration of how secularism and identity emerged as conflicting concepts in the modern world, Akeel Bilgrami elaborates a notion of secular enchantment with a view to finding in secular modernity a locus of meaning and value, while addressing squarely the anxiety that all such notions are exercises in nostalgia.

secularism definition world history: Freedom of Religion and the Secular State Russell Blackford, 2012-01-17 Exploring the relationship between religion and the state Focusing on the intersection of religion, law, and politics in contemporary liberal democracies, Blackford considers the concept of the secular state, revising and updating enlightenment views for the present day. *Freedom of Religion and the Secular State* offers a comprehensive analysis, with a global focus, of the subject of religious freedom from a legal as well as historical and philosophical viewpoint. It makes an original contribution to current debates about freedom of religion, and addresses a whole range of hot-button issues that involve the relationship between religion and the state, including the teaching of evolution in schools, what to do about the burqa, and so on.

secularism definition world history: *Meaning and Value in a Secular Age* Paul Kurtz, 2012-06-26 The secular age has confronted human beings with a fundamental challenge. While the naturalistic worldview rooted in science has persuasively shown that traditional religious conceptions of the universe are unsustainable, it has so far offered no compelling secular narratives to replace the religious narratives so entrenched in civilization. In the absence of religion, how do thoughtful contemporary individuals find meaning in a secular world? In this book, philosopher Paul Kurtz argues for a new approach that he calls eupraxsophy. Kurtz first coined the term in 1988 to characterize a secular orientation to life that stands in contrast to religion. Derived from three ancient Greek roots, eupraxsophy literally means good practice and wisdom. Drawing upon philosophy, science, and ethics, eupraxsophy provides a thoroughly secular moral vision, which respects the place of human values in the context of the natural world and presents an empirically responsible yet hopeful picture of the human situation and the cosmos in which we abide. Editor Nathan Bupp has conveniently gathered together Kurtz's key writings about the theory and practice of eupraxsophy for the first time in this volume. Written with eloquence and scope, these incisive essays show how Kurtz's brand of humanism moves above and beyond the current new atheism. Eupraxsophy successfully bridges the cultural divide between science and value and provides a genuine and constructive alternative to religion. Bupp's informative introduction places the concept of eupraxsophy in historical perspective and shows why it is critically important, and relevant, today.

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.

secularism definition world history: A Secular Humanist Declaration Paul Kurtz, 1980 No Marketing Blurb

secularism definition world history: Constitutional Secularism in an Age of Religious Revival Susanna Mancini, Michel Rosenfeld, 2014 Traditional models of constitutional secularism have struggled to accommodate the modern revival of religious politics. The concept has been criticised as empty or illegitimate, while political and legal struggles have contested its meaning. This book gathers leading experts to examine the scope and substance of constitutional secularism today.

secularism definition world history: *Is Critique Secular?* Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Saba Mahmood, 2013-05-09 This volume interrogates settled ways of thinking about the seemingly interminable conflict between religious and secular values in our world today. What are 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.

secularism definition world history: *Lessons in Secular Criticism* Stathis Gourgouris, 2013-09 Disrupting recent fashionable debates on secularism, this book raises the stakes on how we understand the space of the secular, independent of its battle with the religious, as a space of radical democratic politics that refuse to be theologized.

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