DENIS LACORNE

dates October 2011

Biography
Denis Lacorne is a senior research fellow with the CERI (Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Internationales) at Sciences Po, Paris. A frequent commentator on American politics in the French press and on French television, his books include With Us or Against Us: Studies in Global Anti-Americanism and Language, Nation, and State: Identity Politics in a Multilingual Age, both with Tony Judt. Tony Judt (1948-2010) was the Erich Maria Remarque Professor in European Studies at New York University and director of its Erich Maria Remarque Institute. Denis Lacorne will be in the US this fall to present his last work, Religion in America, to be published by Columbia University Press in August.

selected bibliography

In English

In French:

lectures offered

in English

Book Tour
Denis Lacorne will present his book Religion in America, to be published by Columbia University Press

If you would like to invite this author, please fill out the application form and email it to: Anne-Sophie Hermil, Tel: 212 439 1467 | anne-sophie.hermil@diplomatie.gouv.fr
About the book

*Religion in America*

To be published by Columbia University Press in 2011 in a translation by George Holoch, Foreword by Tony Judt

America is unique in that its political institutions preceded the development of a national identity. The American Revolution and drafting of the constitution did not deepen a preexisting national self. Rather, it created a new political framework to which the "walls" of culture, particularly references to a distant past, were later added. Revisiting this moment in American history and the nation's early efforts at identity, Denis Lacorne identifies two competing narratives drawn from a reformulation of America's past, present, and future.

The first narrative, derived from the philosophy of the Enlightenment, is essentially secular. Associated with the Founding Fathers and reflected in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Federalist Papers, it is predicated on separating religion from politics to preserve political freedom from an overpowering church. Prominent thinkers such as Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and Jean-Nicolas Démeunier, who viewed the American project as a radical attempt to create a new regime free from religion and the weight of ancient history, embraced the American effort to establish a genuine "wall of separation" between church and state. The second narrative casts national identity as the outcome of a progression toward freedom, beginning with the Reformation and culminating with the colonies of Puritan New England. This alternative vision was adopted by Whig politicians and romantic historians, yet still persists among political scientists such as Samuel Huntington. These thinkers insist that America has a core, stable "American creed" based on a mix of Protestant and republican values. Lacorne outlines the role of religion in the making of these narratives and examines, against this background, how key historians, philosophers, novelists, and intellectuals situate religion in American politics.