

POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Political Science 7991/7990 — Spring 2017

August 28: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEOLOGY

“An immutable facet of human existence seems to be the desire for metaphysical solace, or a sense of being beyond oneself, in short, of transcendence. We call it by many names, construct myths about it, tell stories of its power and presence, and construct symbols that evoke it. Equally inevitable, it appears, is that this desire includes a sense of the good, the ethical, which beckons us to a standard of conduct, both individual and social. As we construct our social institutions, we are motivated to shape them in a fashion that respects and resembles those ethical codes. Thus, our politics is shaped by a sense of transcendence, (a God, the Gods, the Good, or Justice are just some of the names we give it), and we are in this fashion the creators and possessors of a political theology.”

January 18 & 25: MYTHOPOEIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOOD

When [man] honors the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right, high indeed is his city; but stateless the man who dares to dwell with dishonor.”

Sophocles

Required Reading: Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus at Colonus*
Aeschylus, *Oresteia*
Euripides, *Trojan Women*, *Bacchae*
Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*

Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, & *Crito*

David D. Corey, “Socratic Citizenship: Delphic Oracle and Divine Sign,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), pp. 201-228 (E-reserve)

February 1 & 8: ANCIENT COVENANTS, THE PROPHETIC VOICE AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Wherever you live, it is probably Egypt. There is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land. The way to that land is through the wilderness.”

M. Walzer

Required Reading: *Exodus & Deuteronomy*
M. Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*
M. Walzer, “The Covenants,” and “Legal Codes,” in *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, Yale University Press, 2012. (E-reserve)

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Isaiah

W. Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination, Prophetic Voices in Exile*

A. Heschel, “What Manner of Man was the Prophet,” and “Justice,” in *The Prophets*, Harper Modern Classics, 1962. (E-reserve)

February 15 & 22 and March 1: AUGUSTINIAN REALISM

I . . . believe . . . that love may be the motive of social action, but . . . justice must be the instrument of love in a world in which self-interest is bound to defy the canons of love at every level.”

R. Niebuhr

Required Reading: Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*
Augustine, Jean Bethke Elshtain, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*.
Edited by Peter Scott & William T. Cavanaugh (E-reserve)

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown

Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, eds. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark

March 8 & 15: NATURAL ORDER AND THE LAW

It must not be supposed that the Church so concentrates her energies on caring for souls as to overlook things which pertain to mortal and earthly life.

Rerum Novarum

Required Reading: Aquinas, *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Edited by Dino Bigongiari
“Aquinas,” Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Edited by Peter Scott & William T. Cavanaugh (E-reserve)

Catholic Social Teaching:

“On the Condition of Labor” (*Rerum Novarum*), Pope Leo XIII, 1891

“After Forty Years” (*Quadragesimo Anno*), Pope Pius XI, 1931

“Christianity & Social Progress” (*Mater et Magistra*), Pope John XXIII, 1961

“Peace on Earth” (*Pacem in Terris*), Pope John XXIII, 1963

“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), Vatican Council II, 1965

“A Call to Action” (*Octogesima Adveniens*), Pope Paul VI, 1971

“On the Development of Peoples” (*Populorum Progressio*), Pope Paul VI, 1967

“Justice in the World” (*Justitia in Mundo*), Synod of Bishops, 1971

“On Human Work” (*Laborem Exercens*), Pope John Paul II, 1981

“On Social Concern” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*), Pope John Paul II, 1987

“The Hundreth Year” (*Centesimus Annus*), Pope John Paul II, 1991

“The Gospel of Life” (*Evangelium Vitae*), Pope Paul II, 1995

“God is Love” (*Deus Caritas Est*), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

<http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/principles/history/>

March 22 & 29: PATHOS AND POLITICS

There are . . . three possibilities for action that the church can take vis-à-vis the state: *first* . . . questioning the state as to the legitimate state character of its actions, that is, making the state responsible for what it does. *Second* is service to the victims of the state's actions. The church has an unconditional obligation toward the victims of any social order, even if they do not belong to the Christian community. . . . The *third* possibility is not just to bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself.

D. Bonhoeffer

Required Reading: D. Bonhoeffer, "Creation and Fall"
D. Bonhoeffer, "The Church and the Jewish Question"
D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* or (Discipleship)

D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*
S. Hauerwas, Bonhoeffer, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Edited by Peter Scott & William T. Cavanaugh (E-reserve)

April 5 & 19 THE TRACE OF THE OTHER

For me, the negative element, the element of violence in the state, in the hierarchy, appears even when the hierarchy functions perfectly, when everyone submits to universal ideas. There are cruelties which are terrible because they proceed from the necessity of the reasonable order. There are, if you like, the tears that a civil servant cannot see, the tears of the Other (Autrui)."

E. Levinas

Required Reading: Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*
Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," trans. R. Cohen, *Philosophy Today* 22 (1978), 127-145. (E-reserve)
William Paul Simmons, "The Third: Levinas' Theoretical Move from An-archival Ethics to the Realm of Justice and Politics," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, V. 25, 83-104 (E-reserve) and . . .
(http://www.academia.edu/2327965/The_Third_Levinas_theoretical_move_from_an-archival_ethics_to_the_realm_of_justice_and_politics)

April 26: THE FALL, EXILE, AND THE KINGDOM

"The truth is that every intelligent man, as you know, dreams of being a gangster and of ruling over society by force alone. As it is not so easy as the detective novels might lead one to believe, one generally relies on politics and joins the cruelest party. What does it matter, after all, if by humiliating one's mind one succeeds in dominating every one? I discovered in myself sweet dreams of oppression."

A. Camus

Required Reading: A. Camus, *The Fall; Exile and the Kingdom*
Cecil L. Eubanks & Peter Petrakis, "Exile, Judgement, and Kingdom: Albert Camus and the Symbolization of Experience" E-reserve

Course Requirements:

In each seminar session, the focus of our attention will be a particular set of readings. **Emphasis will be placed, therefore, on a careful and thorough understanding, interpretation, and analysis of these readings.** Part of my evaluation of your performance in the seminar will depend upon my assessment of how effectively you accomplish this exegetical and interpretive task.

Each week, approximately one-half of the class will be responsible for preparing an interpretive essay on the readings for that week. These essays should be from 2 - 4 pages in length. They will provide the basis of our discussion for that class. Most of the time, these interpretive essays will focus on the assigned readings; on occasion you may be asked to focus on an analytical issue I raise about the readings. In preparing your interpretive essays, you may consult sources other than those assigned. Your essays will be submitted electronically to the class Moodle site, on Mondays at 12:00 p.m. You will be asked to present all or a portion of them in class on the following Wednesday.

Finally, in addition to the interpretive essays you will be asked to choose one of two options. You may prepare and write an individual research project on some topic relating to the course; or, you may take a final examination (take-home), in which you will be asked a broad analytical question covering the course material. What follows is a guide to how the class requirements described above will be factored into my evaluation of your class performance:

- Six Interpretive Essays.....60%
- Oral Presentations & Class Discussion.....10%
- Research Project or Final Examination.....30%

Office Hours: MWF from 9 to 10:30 — or— By appointment at your convenience.

Office: 237 Stubbs Hall — Telephone: [O] 388-1944

Email = poeubk@lsu.edu