

Course Description

In recent years, the role of religion in social and political life has increasingly become a subject of debate and controversy. As an important dimension of this debate has been the reconsideration of the role of religion, political theology, and toleration within political theory. Often discussions of religion within canonical texts were assumed to be either tangential or irrelevant to their core themes, or it was presumed that such thinkers shared a fundamentally “secular” worldview that separated religion from politics. Sharing the fate of many other dualities of modernity, the distinction between the political and the theological in these works has also been challenged. The first aim of this course is to study the main arguments of classical thinkers on religion and how contemporary political theory has revised or built upon their conceptual frameworks. We will probe the role of the distinction between the political and the religious in the emergence of the idea of modern self, modern society and modern state. The second aim of this course is to bring these idea into contemporary debates on secularism and postsecularism, which will be the subject of the second part of the course.

Throughout the course, we will ask: how can we analyze recent debates using foundational thinkers in political theory? And, conversely, how should we re-examine these foundational texts in light of the current moment? Readings include Kant, Marx, Schmitt, Hobbes, Locke, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Connolly, Taylor, Habermas, and beyond.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Grades are based on the following criteria:

- **Class participation (20%):** You should complete the assigned readings and actively participate in class discussion. This portion of your grade is based on both quantity (how often you discuss the readings, ask questions, etc.) and quality (comments based on a careful reading of the material vs. unsubstantiated opinions).
- **Response Papers (50%):** You will write 5 critical response papers based on the readings for a class of your choosing. The papers should be 2 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, 1 inch margins). Since the purpose of the response paper is for you to synthesize the readings on your own, you must turn in your response paper before the start of the discussion section on that topic. Sign-up will occur the first session, please be prepared.
- **Author Defendant (10%):** During the week in which you have been assigned the role of authors’ defendant, you will be stepping into the shoes of an authors of a reading assigned for the seminar. You will be responsible for presenting the main arguments and evidence in the readings and will be expected to be prepared to respond to tough questions about the readings that are raised by me or the other members of the group. Your performance as authors’ defendant will account for 10% of your grade.

- **Final Paper (20%):** Students are required to write a final essay in response to a question that I will provide toward the end of the semester. Your final paper should be no less than 8 pages and no more than 10 pages, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins in 12-point font, Times New Roman. It should not refer to any material beyond the required readings for this course.

Week 1: What is Political Theology?

Monday

Read Syllabus

Wednesday

Carl Schmitt, "Political Theology," in *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 36-52.
 Leo Strauss, "Preface to Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft."

Week 2: Religion and the Social Contract

Monday

Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*. Chapter 1-3, 12, 14-16, 31-35, 37-39, 41, 43-47, and "A Review and Conclusion"
 John Locke. *A Letter concerning Toleration*.

Wednesday

Murphy, Andrew R. "The Uneasy Relationship between Social Contract Theory and Religious Toleration." *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1997, pp. 368-392.
 Richard Tuck, "Skepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century" in *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), ed. Susan Mendus, pp. 21-37.

Week 3: Civil Religion

Monday

Rousseau. *The Social Contract*, Book 4.
 Machiavelli *The Prince*. Ch 28
 Machiavelli *The Discourses*. Chap 11-14.

Wednesday

Beiner, R. (1993). Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion. *The Review of Politics*, 55(4), 617-638.

Week 4: Liberty and Emancipation

Monday

John Stuart Mill. *On Liberty*, Chapter II-IV

Wednesday

Karl Marx. *On the Jewish Question*

Week 5: Slave Morality and Ressentiment

Monday

Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals*. Part I

Wednesday

Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals*. Part II

Week 6: Tocqueville on America

Monday

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Volume 1, Part I— Chapter 2; Part II— Chapter 9.

Wednesday

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Volume 2, Part I—Chapters 5-7, Part II— Chapters 9 & 15

Week 7: Founding Democracy

Monday

Thomas Jefferson, *Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom*
Madison, James. *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*.
Federalist 10
Declaration of Independence

Wednesday

Russell Shorto. "How Christian Were the Founders?" New York Times, February 11, 2010.
Dreisbach, Daniel L. 2011. "The Bible in the Political Rhetoric of the American Founding." *Politics and Religion* 4 (December): 401-427
Bellah, Robert. "Civil Religion in America" *Daedalus* 96(1) (1967): Pp. 1-21.

Week 8: Public Reason and Secularism

Monday

Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in *What is Enlightenment: Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, 58-64
Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Beacon Press, 1984. (excerpt)

Wednesday

Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) pp. 1- 22, 505-538

José Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research* 76.4 (Winter 2009): 1049-1066.

Week 9: Democratic Pluralism

Monday

Bader, Veit. "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?" *Political Theory*, vol. 27, no. 5, 1999, pp. 597–633

Alfred Stepan, 2000. "Religion, democracy, and the "twin tolerations," *Journal of Democracy*, 11:4, 37-56.

Wednesday

Charles Hirschkind, 2008. "Religious Difference and Democratic Pluralism: Some Recent Debates and Frameworks," *Temenos* 44, no. 1: 67-82.

Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen, eds. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 31-58

Week 10: Race and Religion in American Democracy

Monday

Jonathon Kahn & Vincent Lloyd, "Introduction: Managing Race, Managing Religion," in *Race and Secularism in America*, pp. 1-19.

Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Wednesday

Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). 273-324

Week 11 Post- Secularism

Monday

Habermas, Jürgen (2008) 'Notes on a Postsecular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 24: 4, pp. 17-29

Taylor, Charles (2011) 'Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism', and 'Dialogue' in Judith Butler, et. al., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 35–69

Wednesday

Lafont, C (2009) 'Religion and the public sphere What are the deliberative obligations of democratic citizenship?', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 35: 1-2, pp. 127-150

Graham, Elaine L. (2012) 'What's missing? Gender, reason and the post-secular', *Political Theology* 13: 2, pp. 233-245

Week 12 Beyond Church and State

Monday

Scherer, Matthew. *Beyond Church and State: Democracy, Secularism, and Conversion*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. 1-29, 79-96

Wednesday

Connolly, William E. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999. 47-93.

Week 13 Religious Freedom

Monday

Matthew Scherer, "The New Religious Freedom: Secular Fictions and Church Autonomy." *Politics and Religion* 8 (2015): 544-564.

Winnifred F. Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*. Princeton 2005. (excerpt)

Wednesday

Brown, Wendy (2006) *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-24; 25-46; 149-175.

Week 14: Contemporary Issues

Monday

Talal Asad, Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, Saba Mahmood. *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (University of California Press, 2010). (excerpts)

Wednesday

Wrap up class.

FINAL PAPER DUE

Further Readings:

- Robbins, Jeffrey. *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- De Vries, Hent, and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds. *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theological-Political Fragment." In *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 312–13. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.
- Kahn, Victoria. *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Raschke, Carl. *Force of God: Political Theology and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- McCormick, John. "Authority Beyond the Bounds of Mere Reason: A Political-Theological Sketch of the Schmitt-Strauss Exchange." In *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law*, edited by Leonard V. Kaplan, and Rudy Koshar, New York: Lexington Books, 2012. 171–83.
- Smith, Steven B. "Leo Strauss's Discovery of the Theologico-Political Problem." *European Journal of Political Theory* 12, no. 4 (2013): 388–408.
- Batnitzky, Leora. "Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'." In *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, edited by Steven B. Smith, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 41–62.
- Spinoza, Benedict. *Theological-Political Treatise*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- John Locke, "First Treatise of Government" in *Two Treatises of Government*. sections 1-45
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Locke's Philosophy of Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 172-198.
- Locke, "Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina" [1669/1670] (in *A Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. xxxv, 146-148) (or http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp)
- Jack Turner, "John Locke, Christian Mission, and Colonial America," *Modern Intellectual History* 8 (2011): 267-297.
- Martinich, Aloysius. *The Two Gods of Leviathan : Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Richard Tuck, "The Civil Religion of Thomas Hobbes," in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120-138.
- Edwin Curley, "Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 309-334.
- Tracy B. Strong, "How to Write Scripture: Words, Authority, and Politics in Thomas Hobbes," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn, 1993): 128-159.
- Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes on Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 346-380.
- Najemy, John M. "Papius and the Chickens, or Machiavelli on the Necessity of Interpreting Religion." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 60, no. 4, 1999, pp. 659–681

- Fontana, Benedetto. "Love of Country and Love of God: The Political Uses of Religion in Machiavelli." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 60, no. 4, 1999, pp. 639–658.
- Colish, Marcia L. "Republicanism, Religion, and Machiavelli's Savonarolan Moment." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 60, no. 4, 1999, pp. 597–616.
- Terence Ball, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," in *Reappraising Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 107-130.
- Rousseau, "The Creed of the Savoyard Priest," in *Émile* [1762]
- Patrick Riley, "The General Will Before Rousseau," *Political Theory* 6 (1978): 485-516.
- Jason Neidleman, "'Par le bon usage de ma liberté': freedom and Rousseau's reconstituted Christianity," *Rousseau and Freedom*, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 142-157.
- Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, CA. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review* 65 (February 2000): pp. 138-167.