

Political Theology

Syracuse University, Department of Religion
Spring 2014

Instructor: Vincent Lloyd
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30-12:30, or by appointment

Overview:

Political theology examines connections between religious and political ideas. Christian theologians take this as a normative project. They ask: what form ought political ideas to take when they are based on correct religious ideas? The German tradition of political theology inaugurated by Carl Schmitt focuses primarily on one political and religious idea, that of sovereignty. Today political theology in a broader sense, encompassing a large array of political ideas and religious traditions, not only addresses the normative question of theology but also informs scholarship in anthropology, political science, literature, philosophy, and sociology. Political theology also probes claims to secularity, uncovering forgotten or repressed religious influences. In this seminar we will both read contemporary scholarship about political theology and examine the usefulness of political theology as a method for reading a variety of texts.

Objectives:

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

- 1) Identify and understand important approaches to political theology.
- 2) Enter into current conversations about political theology.
- 3) Plan and conduct a small independent research project, culminating in a final paper.

Books:

For Purchase --

1. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago, 2006)
2. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, 1998)
3. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford, 2005)
4. Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, 2011)
5. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, 1965)
6. John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014)

Other Readings:

Will be distributed via e-mail.

Grading:

- 60%: Final Paper (15-20pp), due via e-mail Tuesday, May 6, 5pm
20%: Weekly Reading Responses (a couple paragraphs embedded in e-mail to class, not attached, by 10am Tuesdays)
20%: Critical Response Paper (6-8pp), due via e-mail Friday, March 7, 5pm

Schedule:

The schedule is subject to change.

January 14

William Cavanaugh, "The Myth of the State as Saviour"

Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art, and Politics"

Annika Thiem, "Schmittian Shadows and Contemporary Theological-Political Constellations"

January 21

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*

January 28

Erik Peterson, "Monotheism as a Political Problem"

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, Chapter 2

Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?"

February 4

Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment" and "On the Concept of History"

Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, Chapters 3-7

February 11

Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, 1-16; 109-180, 219-257

Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, Chapters 6 and 8

February 18

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*

February 25

Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*

March 4

Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics*

March 18

Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*

March 25

John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, Part 2

April 1

Luke Bretherton, "Augustine, Alinsky, and the Politics of the Common Good"

J. Kameron Carter, "Paratheological Blackness"

Sarah Coakley, "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God"

Vincent Lloyd, "Neoliberalism, Political Theology, and Mass Incarceration"

April 8

To be determined as a class

April 15

To be determined as a class

April 22

To be determined as a class

April 29

To be determined as a class

Academic Integrity

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Disability Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>

Policy regarding Faith Tradition Observances

SU's religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. Students will have access to a notification form through MySlice for two weeks beginning the first day of class.