

## POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Political Science 4097  
Louisiana State University

Spring 2015  
MWF 2:30-3:20pm  
Coates Hall 212

### INTRODUCTION

What is political theology?

Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Letter from Birmingham Jail," and "I Have a Dream"

### THE GOOD IN THE GREEK POETS

"A man thought the gods deigned not to punish mortals who trampled down the delicacy of things inviolable. That man was wicked. The curse on great daring shines clear; it wrings atonement from those high hearts that drive to evil, from houses blossoming to pride and peril"

Aeschylus

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia* \*

Plato, *Republic*, Books V, VI, VII, and X \*\*

### PROMISE AND THE PROPHETIC VOICE

"Thus says the LORD: 'Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness will be revealed.'"

Isaiah

Exodus \*\*

Isaiah \*\*

Bruggeman on prophetic imagination\*\*

Heschel on the prophet and the prophetic\*\*

## FOUNDATIONS IN CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

"There is nothing so social by nature, so unsocial by its corruption, as this [human] race."

Augustine

Augustine, *City of God* \*

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, selected questions on law \*\*

## HUMAN DIGNITY, FAITH AND REASON

"The church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you. And the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all."

Francis

Reinhold Niebuhr, selected essays\*\*

Pope Leo XIII, "On Capital and Labor," (*Rerum Novarum*) (1891) \*\*

Pope Paul VI, "Of Human Life," (*Humanae Vitae*) (1968) \*\*

Pope John Paul II, "Faith and Reason," (*Fides et Ratio*) (1998) \*\*

Pope Francis, "Pope Francis: The Interview/A Big Heart Open to God," *The National Catholic Review* (2013) \*\*

## RESPONSIBILITY AND ACTION

"It is a kingdom stronger than war and danger, a kingdom of power and authority, signifying eternal terror and judgment to some, and eternal joy and righteousness to others, not a kingdom of the heart, but one as wide as the earth, not transitory but eternal, a kingdom that makes a way for itself and summons men to itself to prepare its way, a kingdom for which it is worth while risking our lives."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* \*

Barmen Declaration \*\*

## **GRAVITY AND GRACE**

"The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: 'What are you going through?' It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled 'unfortunate,' but as a man, exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction."

Simone Weil

Simone Weil, selected essays \*\*

## **EXILE, JUDGMENT, AND KINGDOM**

"The brother moved away a little from the cook and, half turning toward d'Arrast, without looking at him, motioned him to an empty place: 'Sit down with us.'"

Albert Camus

Albert Camus, *The Fall* \*

*Exile and the Kingdom* \*

## **ANGER, JUSTICE, AND LOVE**

"One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are *just* and there are *unjust* laws."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., selected sermons \*\*

"Letter from Birmingham Jail" \*\*

"I Have a Dream" \*\*

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### COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this course is to achieve an understanding of certain fundamental questions regarding the relationship between religion and politics. In this endeavor, we draw on works of political philosophy, scripture, literature, documentary film, and experience.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reflections and reflection presentations = 25%	Ten 1-page reflections, present 3 of these	<b>Grading Scale</b> A = 90-100% B = 80-89.9% C = 70-79.9 D = 60-69.9 F = <60%
Midterm Exam = 20%	In-class essay, Monday, March 2	
Analytical Essay = 25% - Abstract and bibliography (5%) - Rough draft (5%) - Final draft (15%)	See analytical essay dates	
Final Exam = 30%	Take-home essay, due to Stubbs 240 by 2:30pm, Thursday, May 7	

Your course grade is based on reflection essays (25%), a midterm exam (20%), an 8-10 page analytic essay (25%), and a final exam (30%). You will be provided with review questions in advance of the exams. You will need a Blue Book for your midterm exam (available at the LSU bookstore). Your final exam will be a take-home exam, due in Stubbs 240, the Political Science office, no later than **2:30pm, Thursday, May 7, 2015**. You are encouraged to organize your own group study, as it facilitates your understanding of the material and challenges you to think about the major questions and arguments of each text. *All* late material will be penalized. Announcements and readings for **bonus opportunities** will be posted on Moodle or distributed in class. I reserve the right to administer unannounced bonus quizzes.

The analytical essay will consist of an 8-10 page exegetical and critical analysis. A list of suggested topics, as well as a detailed description of the nature of this assignment, will be provided for you. You must have your topic approved. The essay will be due on **Friday, April 24, 2015**. Important dates for the essay:

Abstract and bibliography presentation: Friday, March 27, 2015 (presentation and hard copy, 5%)

Rough draft: Monday, April 13, 2015 (hard copy for comments, 5%)

Final submission: Friday, April 24, 2015 (hard copy, 15%)

### **Reading, Attendance, and Academic Integrity**

Your success in this class depends upon your consistent attendance and participation. Before each class period, you should read the assigned materials and thoughtfully consider their significance for our study. Our task is to read sympathetically in order to read critically – that is, to understand what each author is asking and arguing, and then to thoughtfully evaluate his work. Of course, in order to facilitate analysis and ease of reference, you should **bring your copy of the text** to class. **At the end of each class period, I will announce the readings for the next class period.**

### **Etiquette and Electronics in Class**

Classroom etiquette acknowledges that class time is set apart for a special purpose and requires students to respect others in word and in deed. Make sure you are ready to begin when our class starts and wait until it is over to pack your notes and belongings. Be attentive to what others say, and make an effort to contribute to class discussions. Know that, unless there is an emergency, leaving before class is over is unacceptable. **The use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones is not allowed in class**, except for official note-takers. Using pen and paper instead limits the distractions your laptop presents to you and your neighbor. Importantly, studies show, using pen and paper also contributes to better understanding and more effective learning overall. Audio recorders are allowed, but strictly for your personal use.

### **Moodle**

Login to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings (posted as PDF files or Internet links) and your grades.

## Required Texts

\*Students should purchase the books marked with a single asterisk (available at the LSU bookstore and through online retailers).

\*\*Students should print the selections marked below with a double asterisk from Moodle.

Aeschylus, *Aeschylus I: The Oresteia* (University of Chicago, 1969) [ISBN 0226307786] \*

Plato, *Republic*, Books V, VI, VII, and X \*\*

Exodus \*\*

Isaiah \*\*

Bruggeman on prophetic imagination\*\*

Heschel on the prophet and the prophetic\*\*

Augustine, *City of God* (The Modern Library, 1994) [ISBN 0679600876] \*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, selected questions on law \*\*

Reinhold Niebuhr, selected essays\*\*

Catholic Social Teaching

    "On Capital and Labor," (*Rerum Novarum*), Pope Leo XIII (1891) \*\*

    "Of Human Life," (*Humanae Vitae*), Pope Paul VI (1968) \*\*

    "Faith and Reason," (*Fides et Ratio*), Pope John Paul II (1998) \*\*

Pope Francis, "Pope Francis: The Interview," *The National Catholic Review* (2013) \*\*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Touchstone, Updated Edition, 1997) [ISBN 0684838273] \*

Theological Declaration of Barmen\*\*

Simone Weil, selected essays \*\*

Camus, *The Fall* (Vintage, reprint 1991) [ISBN 0679720227] \*

Camus, *Exile and the Kingdom* (Vintage, reprint 2007) [ISBN 0307278581] \*

Martin Luther King, Jr., selected sermons, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and "I Have a Dream" \*\*