

HILLSDALE COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Political Science 380
Christianity and Politics

David J. Bobb
Lecturer in Political Science
Director, Charles R. and Kathleen K. Hoogland Center for Teacher Excellence

Seminar Description

This seminar examines the major themes of the relationship between Christianity and politics. Major works treating political philosophy and political theology, from the Bible to early American political thought, will be carefully considered to illuminate the most important questions of how political thinkers and statesmen have understood what Augustine called the City of God and the City of Man. The compatibility of these two realms, which according to Augustine are necessarily intertwined, will be questioned from a variety of perspectives, as ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary thinkers are convened in what historically has been a most vigorous discussion.

Major seminar themes include: politics, reason, and revelation; the idea of a Christian polity; the idea of Christian citizenship; original sin and the limits of government; rights and duties; rebellion and revolution; the relationship between political and theological virtues; humility, magnanimity, and mirrors for Christian princes; prudence and political power; justice, war, and religion; toleration and truth; theocracy, democracy, and liberalism; solidarity and civil religion; and political liberty and spiritual liberty.

Seminar Summary

The seminar's point of departure is Friedrich Nietzsche's nineteenth-century indictment of Christianity as a historical force that sapped the strength of nobility and supplanted it with a spirit of weakness. The truth of Nietzsche's charges will be considered with an examination of the Bible itself. Augustine, writing in defense of Christianity against "pagan" allegations that Christianity caused Rome's fall, provides a response that engages much of what Nietzsche would argue much later was debilitating in Christianity. Augustine's arguments, articulated in his monumental work *The City of God*, formed the foundation for Christian political thought for centuries to come. Debate about church-state relations in the Middle Ages, to be taken up next, built upon this Augustinian foundation.

The late medieval rediscovery of Aristotle led to the publication of Thomas Aquinas' Aristotelian political works. Discerning the important differences between Augustine and Aquinas can be accomplished in part with a reading of Dante; equally as important, reading the *Monarchia* is fine preparation for understanding the modern revolution in political thought wrought by Niccolò Machiavelli.

Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*, prepares the way for the political thought of Thomas Hobbes, whose book *Leviathan* serves as an essential aid to John Locke's later introduction of toleration as the political virtue *par excellence*. Exploring the relationship of Martin Luther and John Calvin to modernity, and the modern project of tolerance, is essential to comprehending the scope and scale of the political and theological struggles of the early modern period. Liberalism's attempt to make Christianity mild by infusing it with a soul of tolerance culminates in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's proposal for civil religion. The American founding period, finally, offers a fine example of a society and political order that is an amalgam of ancient and modern, Christian and secular ideas. The early American experience in forging a new policy of religious freedom offers an excellent opportunity to summarily consider the major themes of the seminar.

Office Hours

If you would like to arrange a meeting time, please e-mail me at david.bobb@hillsdale.edu.

Academic Integrity

As stated in the *Hillsdale College Catalog*, all students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. I encourage you to discuss the readings with your friends and classmates. However, all work submitted must be your own and must have been prepared exclusively for this course.

It is essential to academic and intellectual inquiry to learn from others. Thus, in writing papers, you will appropriately draw upon the work of others. Nevertheless, you must give credit where credit is due. Failure to give proper attribution to words, concepts, and evidence borrowed from others constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious academic offense. If you have questions about proper attribution, please consult the instructor prior to turning in academic work.

Required texts

Required texts for the seminar include the following:

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

The Bible (King James Version or Revised Standard Version).

Augustine: Political Writings, ed. Ernest L. Fortin and Douglas Kries (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).

Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, ed. and trans. Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1983).

Books on Reserve

Augustine: Political Writings, ed. Ernest L. Fortin and Douglas Kries (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 1984).

John Hallowell, *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950).

Other books may be placed on reserve throughout the semester.

Seminar Assignments

Class participation (10%)

A seminar requires active participation of all seminar members. Students should come to class having attentively read the assigned texts. Students should be ready to engage the assigned readings, other students, and the instructor in seminar discussion. Because the seminar meets only once per week, attendance is essential.

Reading questions (10%)

Three questions of each student's creation will be submitted on the weekly seminar readings. The questions should incisively explore a core issue raised by the author studied. Questions are due by 5 p.m. each Wednesday prior to the seminar session in which the readings will be discussed. Please e-mail the questions to the instructor. Reading questions submitted late will not be accepted.

Mid-term oral examination (20%)

Students will choose one author or topic selected from a list provided by the instructor and will discuss the essential ideas of the author or topic. In addition, the instructor will choose another author or topic (not the same as the student's selection) on which the student will be examined. Any seminar readings are fair game. Exams will be approximately 20 minutes in length. No notes or books may be used during the oral examination. Mid-term examination will include material studied from Weeks 1-7. Exams will be administered during appointments suitable to the student's schedule.

Short papers (20%: 10% each paper)

Two short papers (3-4 pages in length) will be submitted, one prior to the mid-term oral examination, and one after the mid-term examination. Students will answer the week's seminar question as provided by the instructor. Papers are due at the beginning of the class during which the readings will be discussed.

Term paper (20%)

One term paper (15-20 pages in length) will be written for the seminar. Term paper topics will be chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor. Term paper topic statements should be submitted to the instructor via e-mail or in class. The topic statement should include a 2-3 paragraph summary of the main question or problem posed, the student's response to the question or problem, and the primary sources that will be examined. Please do not submit term papers by e-mail.

Final exam (20%)

The final exam is cumulative, and may be given as a take-home exam.

Explanation of Grading

The following are the standards of judgment for work done in this seminar:

“A”: Excellent

Work meriting an “A” grade is excellent. It demonstrates unusually thorough preparation, genuine comprehension and synthesis, insight, and even originality. Work is written with great clarity and attention to detail. The grade signifies not simply very good work but exceptionally fine work. An “A” grade is rare.

“B”: Good

Work meriting a “B” grade is good. It demonstrates thorough preparation, a grasp of the subject matter and a command of the materials of the seminar. It may not show any special insight or originality, but it demonstrates clear understanding of the material with comprehensive answers presented in a clear and logical manner.

“C”: Average or Acceptable

Work meriting a “C” grade is average or acceptable. The work demonstrates an adequate, though not comprehensive, grasp of the subject matter. Significant information may be overlooked, and the work may not display a full appreciation of the meaning or implication of a question. Answers may be too brief to allow sufficient development. An essay may appear to be derived wholly from lecture or discussion material, ignoring relevant readings or reference to readings.

“D”: Poor

Work meriting a “D” grade is poor. The student demonstrates some knowledge, but the work is shoddy and shows lack of careful preparation. Most information has been overlooked, and the meaning or implication of a question largely has been overlooked. An essay barely covers the assigned topic, and almost completely neglects to address the most significant issues involved.

“F”: Unacceptable

Work meriting an “F” grade is unacceptable for academic credit, and denotes failure. Many facts or references are missing or are misunderstood entirely. There is little or no analysis, and the style is poor, confused, or incomprehensible. A student may attend classes and submit assignments and yet earn an “F” if the product does not reflect some minimal command of the materials of the seminar.

Seminar Schedule

Week 1: Seminar Introduction: Christianity and Politics

Week 2: Nietzsche’s Indictment of Christianity

Primary reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann, ed. and trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 565-656 (handout).

Week 3: Political Philosophy, Political Theology, and the Politics of the Bible

Primary reading:

The Bible (King James Version or Revised Standard Version)

Genesis, Chapters 1-4

Exodus, Chapter 20

I Samuel, Chapters 8-12

Matthew, Chapters 1-5; Chapter 20:20-29

Mark, Chapter 12:13-17

Luke, Chapter 6:12-38

John, Chapters 18-19:24

Acts, Chapter 4:1-22; Chapter 5:12-42

Romans, Chapters 12-13

Philippians, Chapter 3:17-21

Secondary reading:

Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization," Section III, in Leo Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 117-136 (handout). The third section of this essay is sometimes referred to by the title "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy."

Luis E. Lugo, "Caesar's Coin and the Politics of the Kingdom: A Pluralist Perspective," in *Caesar's Coin Revisited: Christians and the Limits of Government*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 1-22; 185-7 (handout).
James V. Schall, S.J., "A Catholic Response," pp. 23-29 (handout).

Week 4: Augustin: The City of God and the City of Man

Primary reading:

Augustine, *Political Writings*, ed. Ernest L. Fortin and Douglas Kries (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).
Introduction, Ernest L. Fortin (pp. vii-xxix)
Brief Chronology (pp. xxx-xxxii)
The Retractations, pp. 1-2
The City of God, excerpts from Books I-XIV (pp. 3-109)

Week 5: Augustin: The City of God and the City of Man, Part II

Primary reading:

Augustine, *Political Writings*
The City of God, excerpts from Books XV-XXII (pp. 110-201)
(special attention to Book XIX, pp. 140-163)

Secondary reading:

Outline and summary of *The City of God*, Book XIX (handout)

Week 6: Augustin: The Compatibility of Christianity and Politics

Primary reading:

Augustine, *Political Writings*
The Compatibility of Christianity and Politics (pp. 202-212)
Law and Self-Defense (pp. 213-217)
War (pp. 218-229)
The Use of Persecution (pp. 230-247)
Property (pp. 248-249)
The Status of Women (pp. 250-253)
Lying (pp. 254-256)

Secondary reading:

Ernest L. Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Modernity," in *Classical Christianity and the Political Order: Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem*, Volume 2 of *Ernest L. Fortin: Collected Essays*, ed. J. Brian Benestad (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), pp. 137-150 (handout).

James V. Schall, S.J., "The 'Realism' of Augustine's 'Political Realism,'" *Perspectives on Political Science* (25) 1996: 117-123 (handout).

Week 7: Two Swords? Church and State in the Middle Ages

Primary reading:

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Part 2: Late Antiquity and Romano-Germanic Christian Kingship

Introduction (pp. 169-176)

Gelasius I (pp. 177-179)

Agapetos (pp. 180-188)

Justinian (pp. 189-194)

Gregory I (195-203)

Part 3: The Struggle over Empire and the Integration of Aristotle

John of Salisbury (pp. 277-296)

Secondary reading:

Ernest L. Fortin, "Politics and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: the Aristotelian Revolution," in *Classical Christianity and the Political Order: Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem*, Volume 2 of *Ernest L. Fortin: Collected Essays*, ed. J. Brian Benestad (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), pp. 177-197 (handout).

Week 8: Thomas Aquinas and the Politics of Prudence

Primary reading:

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Part 3: The Struggle over Empire and the Integration of Aristotle

Thomas Aquinas (pp. 320-361)

St. Thomas Aquinas, Lectures VIII-X on magnanimity, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I. Litzinger (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), pp. 236-249 (handout).

Secondary reading:

Ernest L. Fortin, "Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Problem of Natural Law," in *Classical Christianity and the Political Order: Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem*, Volume 2 of *Ernest L. Fortin: Collected Essays*, ed. J. Brian Benestad (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), pp. 199-222 (handout).

Week 9: Dante, Eternity, and Empire

Primary reading:

Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, ed. and trans. Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Week 10: Machiavelli's Mirror for Princes

Primary reading:

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
 Chapter XI (pp. 45-47)
 Chapters XV-XIX (pp. 61-82)

Secondary reading: See secondary readings for Week 6 (Fortin and Schall)

Week 11: Political Theology and the Protestant Reformation

Primary reading:

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
 Part 5: Renaissance, Reformation, and Radicalism: Scholastic Revival and the Consolidation of Legal Theory
 Martin Luther (pp. 581-608)
 John Calvin (pp. 662-684)

Secondary reading:

John Hallowell, *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950) (handout).
 "The Protestant Reformation" (pp. 60-65)
 "Political Consequences of the Reformation" (pp. 65-67)
 "The Modern Nation State" (pp. 67-69)
 "Political Theory of the Sixteenth Century" (69-72)

Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960) (handout).
 Chapter Five: Luther: The Theological and the Political (pp. 141-164)

Chapter Six: Calvin: The Political Education of Protestantism (pp. 165-194)

**Week 12: Original Sin and the State of Nature:
Calvin and Hobbes (and Locke)**

Primary reading:

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).

Part I (Of Man), Chapter xii (Of Religion; pp. 63-73)

Part I, Chapter xiii (Of the Natural Condition of Mankind, As Concerning their Felicity and Misery; pp. 74-78)

Part I, Chapter xiv (Of the First and Second Natural Laws and of Contracts; pp. 79-88)

Part I, Chapter xv (Of Other Laws of Nature; pp. 89-100)

Part III (Of a Christian Commonwealth), Chapter xxxii (Of the Principles of Christian Politics; pp. 245-249)

Part III, Chapter xxxv (Of the Signification in Scripture of Kingdom of God, of Holy, Sacred, and Sacrament; pp. 271-277)

Part III, Chapter xxxviii (Of the Signification in Scripture of Eternal Life, Hell, Salvation, the World to Come, and Redemption; pp. 301-314)

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 21-58.

Week 13: Rousseau's Civil Religion of Tolerance

Primary reading:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, in *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, volume 4, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994) (handout).

Book IV, Chapter VIII (On Civil Religion; pp. 216-224)

Secondary reading:

Douglas Kries, "Rousseau and the Problem of Religious Toleration," in *Piety and Humanity: Essays in Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. Douglas Kries (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997) (handout).

Week 14: Freedom of Religion and Early American Political Theology

Primary reading:

The Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, "Christian Magnanimity," Sermon preached at Princeton University, September, 1785, *Early American Imprints* microfiche (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985) (handout).

George Washington, Letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport (1790), in *George Washington: A Collection*, ed. W. B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), p. 545 (handout).

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Roger Weightman (1826), in *Thomas Jefferson, Writings*, Merrill D. Peterson, ed., (New York: The Library of America, 1984), pp. 1516-17 (handout).

Secondary reading:

Ernest L. Fortin, "Pros and Cons of Disestablishment: Did the Separation of Church and State Benefit Religion?" *Crisis* (April, 1995): 23-27 (handout).