

**Department Seminar: 20th Century Christian Social and Political Thought  
GOVT 474**

**Monday, 2:40-5:10pm**

**Berkley Center Third Floor Conference Room**

**Fall 2010**

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This seminar is hosted by the Government Department and cross-listed with Theology. The seminar is intended for advanced undergraduates and graduate students.

**Course Description:**

This course will survey the development of 20th century Protestant and Catholic social and political theory. We will begin with *Rerum Novarum*, explore realism (e.g. R. Niebuhr) and liberalism (E. Troeltsch and P. Tillich) and the Barthian rejection of liberalism, then later Catholic Social Teaching (*Quadragesimo Anno*, *Populorum Progressio*, and *Laborem Exercens*), a bit of Liberation Theology, some of the recent work of Metz and Moltmann, and finish with some of the new natural law theory (J. Finnis, R. George, etc.).

We will focus on the ways that classic Protestant and Catholic political theologies construct a vision of power politics, the demands of justice, and the appropriate configuration of the religious grounds of conceptions of justice and right with the realities and demands of power politics. Particular topics include:

- How do Christian thinkers legitimate their political involvement and activity?
- How do Christian thinkers—conscious of history, time, and material reality—shape the political activity around them and their own political activity?
- How do Christian thinkers grapple with modern demands of reason and the principles of liberal democracy in formulating their political agenda?
- How can liberal democratic political communities, shaped by enlightenment ideals, accommodate—or cabin—political theologies?
- What do Christian thinkers make of
  - the secularization of political and legal authority, the rise of liberalism (political and theological)
  - the role and limits of revelation and tradition as a source of meaning and authority
  - the impact of historical consciousness on the claims of religious authority, particularly for political messianism and the enduring religious sources—if any—of legitimating liberal democratic politics

**Expectations and Assignments**

- You should strive to achieve the **ideals of a liberal arts education**: free and candid exchange of ideas, rigorous critique of claims, and toleration for considering variant positions.

- **Thoughtful reading** of the texts in preparation for the class is expected and essential.
- Students should be prepared to participate actively in each week's seminar discussions. **Participation in class** is worth 15% of your grade. Students are expected to be 'ready' to participate at each moment, including 'being called upon' and to discuss and analyze the arguments of particular texts. I will take note of students who do well, poorly, or are not adequately prepared for class. To receive the full credit for class participation, students do not need to ask brilliant questions or answer questions correctly in all circumstances; rather, the credit will be received when it is clear that a good faith attempt has been made by the student to read and comprehend the material and the student can ask reasonable questions about the material, even if they may on occasion not be perfectly correct in their understanding of a particular case or issue. If it is clear that students did not make a good faith effort to read and understand material, and do not make a good faith effort to participate in class (either in passing when directly asked a question or in never voluntarily contributing on their own), then they will receive reduced or no credit for class participation.
  - **Class Presentations:** Each week, one or two students will volunteer (or be assigned) to undertake the task of co-leading the class discussion. We will discuss this more in class, but in general, your task will be to help present an overview of key themes and issues from the reading and pose questions which the class should consider, as related to the topic of the course. Brief handouts are encouraged.
  - This portion of the grade will take into account familiarity with the readings, your active and keen questioning of the text and your colleagues, attendance, your time as a discussion leader, and the quality of your class participation in general.
- You may use your **Laptop Computers** in class for note-taking, for looking up relevant items on the web related to class issues, and for referring to related class readings. All other uses of laptops during class time are unacceptable.
- Students must adhere to the principles of conduct set forth in the Georgetown University **Honor System** unconditionally. I assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, "What is Plagiarism?", "Sanctioning Guidelines", and "Expedited Sanctioning Process."
  - Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:
    - *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*
  - Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).

- Any incident of plagiarism will constitute a failure in the assignment and zero credit for that portion of the grade. More severe sanctions may be administered by the Honor Council.
- **Attend the class sessions.** If you have a legitimate excuse, I need to know it (by email). Otherwise, be there. Legitimate excuses include illness, family situation, or other events or responsibilities that may occasionally draw you away from a regular class meeting. To be legitimate, I need to know about it beforehand, or it may be deemed legitimate if I receive a notice from your dean, in the case of more serious issues.
  - Attendance will be recorded at each class.
  - **Excused absences** *do not* yield a grade penalty, although I reserve the right to impose reasonable “make-up” meetings or assignments to ensure that the covered material is satisfactorily understood.
  - You will be penalized for **unexcused absences**. Penalties for unexcused absences are as follows:
    - 1                      1 grade down (e.g. a B reduced to a C)
    - 2 or more unexcused absences will constitute a failure to complete the requirements of the course satisfactorily. Any student who misses more than two class sessions, including online sessions and assignments, for any reason may be involuntarily dropped from the course.
- Research Paper
  - For **undergraduates**, this course is a department research seminar; as such, the majority of a student's written work will consist in a **major research paper** of about 25 pages (worth 85% of the total grade).
  - For **graduate students**, a substantial research paper will be due at the completion of the term, in accordance with Graduate School and respective Department policy (esp. as pertaining to any extensions on due date).
  - We will work together to complete each major stage of the paper writing process, including topic identification, research, outlining, drafting, and critical editing. More details discussed in class.
  - The final draft is due on December 21, at 5pm. You may email me your paper. If you email the paper to me, you must confirm that I have received it. To confirm that I received it:
    - Once I receive the paper, I will open it to verify it is intact and readable.
    - If the paper is complete and readable, I will send a confirmation email noting that I have received it and all is complete.
    - If there is a problem with the paper (e.g. it is corrupt and I can't open it), I will send an email noting that you need to take further action.
    - **You are required to check your email**, and you must contact me within 12 hours of the deadline in case you have not received a

confirmation email or in case you need to resend a non-corrupted version.

- There will be no late papers accepted past the deadline without a legitimate excuse from your school's Dean's office. Failure to complete the final assignment on time will constitute a failure of the course.

## Office Hours

My office is located in the Berkley Center, 3307 M Street NW, Suite 200.

Office hour times:

I am available at times outside of this time by appointment, which may be scheduled by email.

## Course Materials:

The seminar will involve close textual readings and discussion. Students are expected to attend class with the readings. Some readings will be distributed via email in .pdf format (and may be distributed as well in hard copy format). The following books are available for purchase:

- Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion and History*, J.L. Adams and W.F. Bense, trs., (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991)
- Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analysis and Ethical Applications* (1954), Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-500222-9
- Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics*, Charles Scribner's Sons (1932), Westminster John Knox Press 2002: ISBN 0-664-22474-1
- *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, Robert George, editor, (Oxford, 1995) 0-19-823552-6
- John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, (Oxford, 1980) 0-19-876110-4
- Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (15th Anniversary Edition with New Introduction by Author (Orbis, 1988) 0883445425

## Schedule

Week 1: September 1 (The first class meets on a Wednesday)

- Introduction to the Course and Topic

Week 2: September 6

- Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1893) (handout)

Week 3: September 13

- Ernst Troeltsch, *Christian Thought: Its History and Application*, F. von Hügel, ed., (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), pp. 3-33 (handout)

- Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion and History*
  - “On the Question of the Religious A priori” pp. 33 ff.
  - “Faith and History” pp. 134 ff.
  - “Eschatology” pp. 146 ff.
  - “Christian Natural Law” pp. 159 ff.
  - “The Dispositional Ethic” pp. 168 ff.
  - “Political Ethics and Christianity” pp. 173 ff.
  - “The Essence of the Modern Spirit” pp. 237 ff.
  - “Modern Philosophy of History” pp. 273 ff.
  - “On the Possibility of a Liberal Christianity” pp. 343 ff.

Week 4: September 20

- Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analysis and Ethical Applications*
- Tillich, “Kairos,” *The Protestant Era*, tr. James Luther Adams, 1957, pp. 32-51
- Tillich, “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” *Political Expectation*, 1971, pp. 58-88
- Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” ed. V. Nuovo, *Visionary Science*, 1987

Week 5: September 27

- Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, selections (**skim**)
- Barth, “The Christian Community and The Civil Community” and “The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change” in *Against the Stream* (New York: Philosophical Library)
- Barth, *The Humanity of God*, selections

**Paper topic and preliminary outline (1-2 pages) due to my email by 5pm on Friday October 1.**

Week 6: October 4

- Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics*
- Niebuhr, “Augustine’s Political Realism,” *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, 1953, pp. 119-146.

Week 7: October 11

- No class, Columbus Day

Week 8: October 25

- *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Populorum Progressio* (1961), and *Laborem Exercens* (1991)

Week 9: November 1

- Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (15th Anniversary Edition with New Introduction by Author (Orbis, 1988) 0883445425

Week 10: November 8

- Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World*, tr. by William Glen-Doepel, (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), selections
- Metz, *A Passion for God*, selections from chaps 1, 2, and 9
- Metz, "The Church's Social Function in the Light of a "Political Theology," *Concilium*, 1968:6
- Metz, "The Future in the Memory of Suffering," *Faith and the Future*, 1971
- Metz, "Suffering Unto God," *Critical Inquiry*, 20:4, 1994
- Metz, "The Crucified God: God and the Trinity Today," *Faith and the Future*, 1971

**Comprehensive, annotated outline (6-10 pages) due to my email by 5pm on Friday November 12.**

Week 11: November 15

- Jürgen Moltmann, "Political Theology," *Theology Today*, 28:1, April 1971
- Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 1-9, 16-20, 129-139, 191-202, 209-222
- Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and the World of Politics," *Concilium*, 1968:6

Week 12: November 22

- Richard John Neuhaus, *Religion and Politics: "The Great Separation," First Things*, January 2008
- Other selections of recent American debates about politics and religion

Week 13: November 29

- John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, (Oxford, 1980) 0-19-876110-4
- "Natural Law and the Ethics of Traditions," Joseph Boyle; "Natural Law and Human Nature," Robert George; and "Truth, Natural Law, and Ethical Theory," Jeffrey Stout, in *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, Robert George, editor, (Oxford, 1995) 0-19-823552-6

Week 14: December 6

- Robert P. George, "Democracy, Law, and the Human Person", Address at International Conference, "Democracy, Institutions and Social Justice," Rome, May 18, 2006
- "Against the Old Sexual Morality of the New Natural Law: A Critique of John Finnis" Stephen Macedo; and "Good without God," Michael S. Moore in *Natural Law, Liberalism, and Morality*, ed. Robert George, (Oxford, 2001) 0-19-924300-x

**Final paper (20-25 pages) due to my email by 5pm on December 21.**