

The Rhetoric of Political Theologies (Graduate Seminar 2007)

Professor: Matthew Scherer

Course Description

This graduate seminar will examine some of the many political theologies articulated in early Christian and early modern texts with an eye toward tracing their reverberations in the rhetoric of contemporary political theory and contemporary politics. We will address questions such as these: How are current concepts of sovereignty, democracy, secularism and secularization in particular inflected by traditional political-theologies? To what extent and with what necessity do they reiterate established patterns, and to what extent do they articulate new conceptions of the relations between religion and politics? To what extent do available political-theological theories illuminate contemporary politics, and to what extent do they obscure its contours?

Schedule

8-28

Introduction

9-4

1. Jose Casanova, "Secularization, Enlightenment, and Modern Religion," in *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 10-39.*
2. Talal Asad, "Secularism, Nation-State, Religion"*
3. Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theological-Political?"*
4. Hent de Vries, intro to *Political Theologies**

9-11

1. Paul, *Letter to the Romans**
2. Alain Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*
3. Daniel Boyarin, *Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (selections)*

9-18

1. Augustine, *City of God*, books 13, 14, 15, 18, 19* (511-648, 761-895),

Recommended: Augustine, *Confessions* books 7-10
 R.A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, chaps. 2-3*

9-25

1. Martin Luther, "On Secular Authority"*
2. Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk IV chap 20*
2. Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation"*

10-2

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, intro-2, 5-7, 10-18, 21, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 44.1-13, 46.1-13

10-9

1. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Essays on the Concept of Sovereignty*
2. Walter Benjamin, *Critique of Violence**

Recommended: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

10-16 (Critical Theory Symposium, *Is Critique Secular?*)

1. Baruch Spinoza *Theologico-Political Treatise*, preface-chap. 7, chaps. 12-15

Recommended: Leo Strauss. *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 1-31.*
Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2: The Adventures of Immanence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3-27.*

10-23

1. Baruch Spinoza *Theologico-Political Treatise*, chaps. 16-20

Recommended: Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, chaps 13, 15, 16*
Etienne Balibar, "The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*: A Democratic Manifesto" in *Spinoza and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1998).*

10-30

1. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*

Recommended: --., *The Conflict of the Faculties* (part one)*

11-6

1. William Connolly, *Why I'm not a Secularist*, intro, 1, 2, 7

Recommended: --., *Pluralism*, chaps. 1 and 5.*

11-13

1. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*

Recommended: --., "Faith and Knowledge..."*
--., "The Future of the Profession.."

11-20

AAR and Thanksgiving -- No meeting

11-27

1. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*, chaps 1-3, 7, 8

Recommended: Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom & Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, 2-4*

12-4

1. Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*

Recommended: --., *The Claim of Reason*, 3-36.*