

Religion 697 – Spring 2010
Capstone course, “Secularism and Political Theology”
Professor Jonathan Boyarin
125F Saunders; office hours by appointment at jboyarin@unc.edu

Required texts:

Lilla, *The Stillborn God*

deVries, ed., *Political Theologies*

(All other assigned readings listed below will be posted on Blackboard under course documents)

Syllabus

1/12 Introduction

1/14 critique of the secularization thesis (“Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept”)

1/19 Jakobsen and Pellegrini, “World Secularisms.”

1/21 Kirwan, *Political Theology: A New Introduction*, Preface and Chs. 1-2

1/26 Lilla, Intro. and Ch. 1.

1/28 No class; prepare an initial memo to me reflecting your primary thinking and research on a paper topic.

2/2; Lilla, Ch. 2; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 12; during this week I will meet with each of you to discuss your research and writing plans for the final paper.

2/4 Lilla, Ch. 3.

2/9 Lilla, Ch. 4.

2/11 Lilla, Ch. 5.

2/16 Lilla, Chs. 6 and 7

2/18 Guest speaker Martin Land

2/23 Habermas in PT, pp. 251-260 and Pope Benedict XVI (Ratzinger) in PT, pp. 261-268; two-page paper proposals due.

2/25 Brown in PT, 298-317

3/2 Sanches in PT, 401-426

³/₄ Das in PT, 427-443.

March 9 spring break

March 11 spring break

3/16 Valenta in PT, 444-474

3/18 Asad in PT, 494-526

3/23 Prato in PT, 557-587; interim reports on paper progress due by e-mail (if you are encountering problems, be specific so I can help you!).

3/25 No class

3/30 meet without professor to workshop paper progress

4/1 (this session may be by Webcam) Bennett in PT, 602-616

4/6 no class Passover; paper drafts due by e-mail, 11:00 p.m.

4/8 presentations

4/13 presentations

4/15 presentations

4/20 presentations

4/22 presentations

4/27 presentations

4/29 11:00 p.m. final papers due

Student responsibilities and grading criteria:

1. Submission of discussion points on Blackboard, by 11:00 a.m. of the day on the class is being held (one half of the students in the class will be responsible for posting substantial discussion points every other class session). These discussion points should be no longer than 150 words. They should not be summaries of the reading, but “points of entry” into the discussion-something that struck you as insightful, or problematic, or puzzling, or pertinent to the larger issues of the class. Cumulatively these will constitute-10% of your grade.
2. Take-home examination following last class at which we will be discussing Lilla (February 16), due in class at the next class session (February 18)-20%.
3. Group (3 students per group) responsibility for leading class discussion of one of the assigned readings in Political Theologies. I will grade these on the liveliness and lucidity of your class leadership, your teamwork, and your engagement of your fellow students in the discussion-10%.
4. Active participation in class discussions-10%.
5. Conference-style presentation of your research topic-10%.
6. Final paper-40%.

Please note: As a capstone course, this is an advanced research seminar. To underscore what I’ve just written, this means you should be prepared (a) to share responsibility for making class discussions dynamic, through submission of your discussion points and especially your participation in class discussion and your creative and carefully planned group direction of one class session; (b) to help lead one class discussion as though you (and your co-leaders) were the professor; and (c) to write a research paper that reflects careful consideration of the syllabus as well as the accumulated critical and substantive knowledge you have acquired as a UNC undergraduate, and especially as a major in the Religious Studies department. My standard for grading the final papers, in particular, will be a paper that you would be confident submitting as a writing sample for a graduate school application.

GUIDELINES FOR FINAL PAPER

THIS CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY RATHER THAN A CHORE (ADMITTEDLY, IT'S A LOT OF WORK IN ANY CASE) IF YOU TAKE SOME OF THESE HARD-EARNED (BY ME) LESSONS TO HEART. I want *great* papers from all of you, not least so that I can come back next year and do it again as an enthusiastic teacher who expects and gets creative and solid work from his students.

Start thinking about your topic NOW:

Start from things you know or things you don't know but are already intrigued by. There should be plenty of both at this stage of your undergraduate career. The theme of this capstone-in very simple terms, the relation of any and all things religious to government and to any and all things political, and to secularism viewed either as a kind of "religion without religion" or as the sphere of non-religious discourse-is very, very broad. How might that theme be related to:

Previous coursework you've done in Religious Studies and related fields, whether on particular traditions or different scholarly approaches;

Research questions that arise out of your previous course work, but that you haven't had a chance to follow up on; or

Work that you think you might be doing once you graduate from our department?

Also, look through the entirety of the reader that I'm making you buy and carry around- *Political Theologies*, what a monster! and see how much fascinating (?) stuff we're not going to get to read together in class. That might get you started.

I've placed a number of other useful sources on secularism and political theology on reserve at the undergraduate library-go browse these in further quest of brilliant topic ideas.

General guidelines and instructions:

Proposals: I need to know what you're planning to write about (and hope to see evidence that you've *already* realized that your first idea was too broad, and have narrowed it down); how you plan to go about creating a focused discussion of that topic that takes account of existing scholarship and adds the results of your own new research and critical insights; and, if at all possible, some hints about what position you might end up taking, if you had to show your cards at this early date (this is one way in which a proposal, which is prospective, differs from an abstract, which is retrospective). In addition, I want to see an annotated initial bibliography, including at least TEN sources,¹ eight of which must be scholarly books or articles; no more than

¹ Actually, ten is *not* a lot: if it's a feasible topic and you're doing timely and reasonably efficient research, you'll find them fairly easily. If you're not finding them, consider modifying the topic-that's one reason why I want you to do this legwork up front. You may well and you probably will need at least a few more sources for a really solid

two of which may be from the same edited volume; and no more than two of which may be on the course syllabus. Your proposal should be 400-500 words long (that's relatively long for a paper proposal, but I want to see some detail.)²

Finding sources:

For research help, *consult a research librarian* at Davis or at the undergraduate library; that's their job and they're thrilled to be asked.

Sources do not appear magically; even in the age of Google, it takes time to (a) *identify* good sources and (b) *acquire* them. (What will you do if you realize two days before the paper's due that a key source is only in print and is checked out or "just not there?").

Do not assume sources are alternatively (a) not available electronically or (b) available electronically-find out (e.g., through the library catalogue and through "e-journals" on the library catalogue).

When you find a printed source (especially a book), go to the stacks to retrieve it and *see what else is around it*: remember, there's some logic to the cataloguing system.

When you've got one good source, *acquire it* (in print or online) and look at *its* bibliography-that should be a great finding tool in itself.

Internet sources may certainly be used in the final paper, but may not be included in your preliminary bibliography. Wikipedia and similar online sources may be cited as representative of readily available information, but not as sources of factual or critical authority, especially if (like Wikipedia) they are unsigned.

Organization, etc.:

Total length: 5,000-6,000 words, *exclusive of abstract and bibliography* (in the neighborhood of 18-22 pages, but please regard the word count, rather than the number of pages, as definitive).

Must include a descriptive abstract; see

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/abstracts.html>

See the Writing Center's document on writing papers in Religious Studies:

http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/religious_studies.html

paper, but I will not final bibliographies including many sources that are not really utilized in the body of the paper. Also, if you're having trouble finding sources on a given topic it may indicate that the topic isn't really "given" yet-that is, you haven't clearly identified what you plan to write about. So looking for sources may help you clarify the substance of your topic as well.

² For another professor's way of saying basically the same thing, see <http://ocw.nd.edu/arabic-and-middle-east-studies/islamic-societies-of-the-middle-east-and-north/assignments/Term%20Paper%20Proposal%20Guidelines.html> (but follow my requirements, not hers, about the number of sources on your preliminary bibliography).

At any point in this process, if you're having difficulty or seek reassurance, make an appointment at the Writing Center: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/writing.html>

Citation format: See the guidelines promulgated by the Religious Studies department at UNC-Charlotte (I don't think you'll need to buy a Turabian manual; I think you'll find sufficient detail right here): <http://www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/research/writingguideformat.htm>

Please note their comments about substantive footnotes; I would be delighted to see you include at least a couple of these if appropriate.

Organization, spelling, and grammar all "count." I would much rather spend my attention on the content of your ideas and the substance of your research than doing line by line copyedits. Get your drafts done in time to read and correct them yourself *and* to exchange them with a friend.

Read your draft (at least part of it; this is, I know, both tiresome and daunting) to yourself. If it doesn't make sense, rewrite it so that you sound at least a little bit more "like a normal person," in Jackie Mason's immortal words.

Instructions for revision (first to final draft):

1. Save your first draft (without my markup) as a new version.
2. Turn on "track changes;" for instructions, see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/comments.html>
3. Save the redlined version as a new version.
4. Save a clean version (accept all changes) as the final version.
5. Submit (3) and (4) to me by the due date/time for the final paper.