

STPH 4880
Political Theologies
Tuesdays 2:10-5:00
Mudd 102

Inese Radzins
PSR-Holbrook 217
Office hours: by appointment

iradzins@psr.edu
510-849-8932

Course Description

The recent resurgence of the language of religion in the public sphere calls for a re-examination of the relationship between theology and political theory. What are the connections between ideas of God and power, especially in an age of *secularism*? Is the theological always political? And, can the political ever be considered a-religious? If “modern theories of the state are secularized theological concepts” (Schmitt) how can one rethink and critique either state or theology? This course explores the idea of *political theology* by engaging a wide range of ancient, medieval and modern texts, including Paul’s letter to the Romans, Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, Luther, Schmitt, Benjamin, Weil, and Arendt.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course with a grade of B or better, students will be able to:

- (1) Describe different ways of conceptualizing the theological/political
- (2) Understand the relationship between political theologies and other Christian doctrines such as revelation, salvation, and anthropology
- (3) Identify and analyze the methodological intersections between political theologies and ideas of divine revelation (especially in terms of the dynamic *immanence/transcendence*)
- (4) Interpret texts critically—with precision and depth—and in relation to the historical identity of both the text and the reader; paying attention to issues of race, sexual and gender orientation, ethnicity, class, culture, nationality and religious affiliation

Course Expectations

Attendance and Participation: All students will be expected to contribute to the success of this course by attending every class and arriving on time; reading the assigned materials and thinking critically about them; listening respectfully and contributing to discussion.

Honor Code: Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated at PSR or GTU. Please refer to your student handbook for more information about PSR's plagiarism policy or contact me if you have any questions.

For more information see <http://www.psr.edu/plagiarism-policy>

Students with Special Needs: Students with special needs should speak to the instructor during the first week of class, so that we can arrange for any academic accommodations.

Course Requirements and Grading

The relative weight of each criterion in the final grade will be:

1. Class participation (25%)

Class sessions are work sessions in which students will be asked to contribute to the discussion, respond to questions, write short reflection papers, etc. In order to prepare for class, read all assigned materials carefully and take notes that will help you engage in discussion. **Bring at least two specific questions to class that are drawn from the week's readings.**

2. Working definition of Political Theology (10%)

The goal of the assignment is to help you develop a working description of the concept *political theology*. This is a one to two page description of how the term *political theology* might be understood. It is to be posted on the class Moodle site by October 2, so that everyone can read them before class on October 4.

3. Paper (40%)

M.Div. and M.A. students can write two 8-10 page papers (due Oct 20 and Dec 1)
Ph.D. students will write a 20 page paper (proposal due Oct 20, paper due Dec 1)
Before determining the topic of your paper make sure that you consult with the instructor.

4. Final Exam (25%)

An in-class final exam (essay form) covering the material from the course

For additional information see the PSR grading policy: <http://www.psr.edu/grades>

Course materials:

Paul's letter to the Romans

Michael Kirwan, *Political Theology* (Fortress Press)

Augustine, *City of God* (Penguin Classics)

Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politico* (Hackett)

Simone Weil, *Need for Roots* (Routledge)

Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (Schocken)

Course Schedule

- Sept 6 Introduction
- Sept 13 What is Political Theology? (Readings on Moodle)
Vincent Lloyd, *The Problem with Grace*, “Introduction”
Michael Kirwan, *Political Theology*, Chapters 1-2
Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, pages 114-153
Recommended: Claude LeFort, *The Permanence of the Theologico Political?*
- Sept 20 What is Political Theology? (cont’d)
José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Ch 1
Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, Ch 6
Charles Davis, *Theology and Political Society*, Ch 6
Ernesto Laclau, “On the Names of God”
- Sept 27 Paul’s letter to the Romans (and Galatians)
Jacob Taubes *The Political Theology of Paul* (Moodle)
- Oct 2 (Sun) ***Working definition of political theology due on Moodle***
- Oct 4 Augustine, *City of God*, excerpts from Books 1, 6-7, 13-15, 18-19
Kirwan, *Political Theology*, Ch 4
- Oct 11 Aquinas, *St Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (Moodle)
Kirwan, *Political Theology*, Ch 4
- Oct 18 Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, Preface 1, 2, 4, 6
- Oct 21 (Fri) ***First paper due OR Paper proposal with bibliography***
- Oct 25 NO CLASS – READING WEEK**
- Nov 1 Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* 7, 12-17, 19, 20
- Nov 8 Luther, “On Secular Authority”
Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV Ch 20

Weber, "Politics as Vocation"
Kirwan, *Political Theology*, Ch 5

Nov 15 Kirwan, *Political Theology*, Ch 6-7
Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*

Nov 22 Special Guest: Vincent Lloyd
Lloyd article "What is Black Political Theology?"
Review "Introduction" from *The Problem with Grace*

Nov 29 Simone Weil, *Need for Roots*
Recommended: Kirwan, Chapter 8

Dec 6 *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*
(ed: Mendieta and VanAntwerpen)
Recommended: Kirwan, Chapter 9

Dec 9 (FRI) ***Final Paper Due***

Dec 13 Final Exam

Course schedule is a guideline and is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor