Core Reflection Seminar (ES 491) | Spring 2014
Prof. Mike McCurry | mmccurry@psw-inc.com
Prof. Kristopher Norris | kmn4jj@virginia.edu

Mondays | Site visits, various locations
Tuesdays | Classroom lecture and discussion, 8:30–10:30a in Kresge K-105

Course Description
This seminar is the core of the NCSS program in ethics, theology, and public policy. It combines readings, classroom discussion, and academic writing assignments with visits to policy experts, advocacy groups, and public officials. Its aim is to integrate theological reflection about the character and mission of the church with information about current issues in American public life.

Course Goals
1. To develop the students’ ability to think theologically about public policy issues.
2. To provide background material and tools to inform judgments about public life.
3. To present a variety of theological perspectives and concrete models of the intersection of Christian theology and political life.
4. To aid students in making vocational choices.
5. To help students deepen their passion for public theology and social justice.
6. To help future pastors learn how to guide and conduct civil discussions on contentious issues in a congregational setting.

Course Requirements
1. Attendance at site visits: this includes active participation in the conversations at all site visits. Active participation in seminar meetings: this includes doing all of the reading and being prepared to discuss the texts. (30% of course grade)
2. A 4-page midterm paper due at the end of reading week (due March 18) that will offer a personal reflection on key insights in the course and key questions remaining to be addressed. (10% of course grade)
3. Six posts of 200–250 words on the class Blackboard site which reflect on either or both of the readings and class visits of that week, due by the Wednesday after that class. Also at least four 100-word thoughtful responses to a posting made by a
fellow student in the course. Professors will comment from time to time but these dialogues are designed to encourage thoughtful engagement on the issues we will encounter, and are a serious part of the learning in this course. (20% course grade)

4. At the conclusion of the seminar each student will write a 6–8 page final paper on a topic of choice illuminated by the semester. The paper should also describe the student’s vocational goals and integrate any insights gained from their experience in the NCSS. Topics will be reviewed by professors and approved by April 14. Paper due May 6. (40% course grade)

Required Texts

All other course readings are available on-line via Blackboard or web link in syllabus.

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Course Schedule

*(site visits on Mondays, reading assignments on Tuesdays)*

1. APPROACHES TO CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

**Foundations in Christianity and Politics**

January 27
1:00p Initial Gathering
Public Strategies Washington

3:00p Dr. Shaun Casey
Director of Faith-Based Initiatives
U.S. State Department

January 28
Daniel 7, Matthew 5-7, Luke 20:19-26, Romans 13, Revelation 13
Augustine, *City of God*: Book V: Chs 13, 16, 21, 24,
Book XIX: 6, 7, 11-17, 24
Luther, *On Temporal Authority*
Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.20
Church and Politics in America
February 3
1:00p Melissa Rogers, Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

3:00p Mara Vanderslice Kelly, Deputy Director, White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

February 4
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (excerpt on religion as America’s first political institution)

Church & State and the Politics of the Common Good
February 10
1:00 Rev. Jennifer Butler.
CEO, Faith in Public Life

3:00 John Carr
Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

February 11
Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, Ch 1
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

National and Global Politics
February 17
1:00 Mike McCurry, Co-Director, NCSS
Former White House Press Secretary and Spokesman, U.S. State Department

3:00 Christopher Hale, Senior Fellow
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good Center for American Progress
February 18
Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, Ch 3, Ch 4, Conclusion
James Mumford, “Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right”

II. FOREIGN POLICY AND THE USE OF FORCE

February 24 1:00p Denis McDonough, White House Chief of Staff

February 25
Augustine, “Against Faustus”
Thomas Aquinas, “War,” *Summa Theologica* II-II Q. 40
Martin Luther, “Sermon on the Mount” (excerpt)
*Schleitheim Confession* (Anabaptist)
US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*

March 3 1:00 Doug Johnston, President,
International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

3:00p Jim Winkler, General Secretary/President
National Council of Churches
Former General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church

March 4 Doug Johnston, “Islamic View of the West”
Barack Obama, *Nobel Peace Prize Speech*
“Responsibility to Protect” Summary
“Schlesinger Report” (Appendix on Detention Operations)
Alan Dershowitz, “The Case for Torture Warrants”
“An Evangelical Declaration Against Torture”

March 10 & 11 *Reading Week: No visits or class sessions*
III. GLOBAL POVERTY AND MIGRATION

Poverty Policy

March 17
1:00
David Beckmann, President
Bread for the World

3:00
Tim Goeglein, Senior Advisor
Focus on the Family

March 18
US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, Introduction, Ch 1—3
Gustavo Gutierrez, “Poverty” in *A Theology of Liberation*

Midterm Papers Due

March 24
1:00p
Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners

3:00p
Michael Elliot, President and CEO
ONE Campaign

March 25
Jim Wallis, excerpts from *On God’s Side*
Bono, “Remarks at National Prayer Breakfast, 2006”

Immigration Policy

March 31
1:00
Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director
NETWORK

3:00
Michael Cromartie
Ethics & Public Policy Center

April 1
Hernandez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States”
Reed, “Refugee Rights and State Sovereignty: Theological Perspectives on the Ethics of Territorial Borders”

Heyer, “Strangers in Our Midst: Day Laborers and Just Immigration Reform”

**IV. FAITH AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

**Trends in Faith & Politics**

- **April 7**
  - 1:00p
  - Michelle Boorstein, Religion Reporter
  - The Washington Post

- **3:00p**
  - Dr. Robert P. Jones, CEO
  - Public Religion Research Institute

- **4:30**
  - David Price, Congressman
  - Cannon House Office Building

- **April 8**
  - Fowler, et. al. “Latino and African American Religion and Politics” & “Gender, Religion, and Politics” in *Religion and Politics in America*
  - Robert Bellah, “Fueling the Tensions” in *The Restructuring of American Religion*

**Critiques of Faith & Politics**

- **April 14**
  - 1:00
  - Ambassador Dennis Ross, Distinguished Fellow
  - The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

- **3:00**
  - Doug Tanner, Founder and Senior Advisor
  - The Faith & Politics Institute

- **April 15**
  - James Hunter, “The Christian Right,” and “The Christian Left” from *To Change the World*

- **April 21**
  - 1:00p
  - Reverend Dean Snyder, Pastor
Organizing Faith & Politics

April 22
Reinhold Niebuhr, “American Politics,” from Love and Justice
Hauerwas & Willimon, “Christian Politics in the New World,” in Resident Aliens
Emilie Townes, “Religious Values, Public Policy, and Women’s Moral Autonomy” in Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil

April 28
1:00p
Mark Fraley, IAF Community Organizer

3:00
Amy Vruno, Lead Organizer
Washington Interfaith Network

April 29
Bretherton, Christianity and Contemporary Politics, Ch 2

Conclusions

May 7
Exam Week: Final Papers Due