

Ethics, Religion and International Politics

International Studies 600 / Theology 563

Boston College, Fall 2013

Mon/Wed 3:00 - 4:15pm; discussion section Wed 4:30-5:20 or Thu 3:00-3:50

Professor Erik Owens

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Course description:

This class examines diverse religious and secular models for relating ethics to contemporary international affairs, as well as specific areas of international politics where ethical questions are likely to arise, including sovereignty, terrorism, peacemaking, human rights, economic justice, and the use of force in war or humanitarian interventions. Special attention is given to theological perspectives and religious actors.

This course meets learning goals 2 and 3 of the undergraduate theology major, which prepares students to reflect theologically on contemporary social, cultural, and ethical dimensions and implications of Christian faith; and to mount cogent, constructive theological arguments in dialogue with other disciplines.

Course requirements:

- 1. Participation (20%):** Active and informed participation is crucial to understanding this material, so you will be graded on a balance of quality and quantity of participation. Students are expected to attend each class, complete all the required reading, contribute to class discussions, and submit assignments on time. In addition, you are expected to:
 - a. write 5 posts on our course blog (share.bc.edu) and comment on 10 others [by Dec. 12]
 - b. attend at least 10 of the 12 discussion sections
 - c. make a short (5-7 minute) presentation about a suggested reading assignment in a discussion section (details provided on course web site)
 - d. attend the Boisi Center's Oct 22 panel on U.S. Counter-Terrorism Strategy (6pm, Fulton 511)
- 2. Two short papers (50%):** Students will write two short essays, each 5-6 pages in length (double-spaced), on an assigned topic. Papers must demonstrate critical understanding of the key themes and readings of that portion of the course. Each is worth 25% of your final grade; due dates listed below.
- 3. Final exam (30%):** Closed-book, in-class, comprehensive final exam, Dec 17, 9am-12pm. Study guide will be distributed in advance of the exam; students are encouraged to study in groups outside of class.

The grading scale:

- A = excellent work** (A= 95-100; A- = 90-94)
B = good work (B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82)
C = adequate work (C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72)
D = poor work (D = 60-69)
F = inadequate or insufficient work (59 & below)

Course Readings:

Most of the course readings will be posted online at our BC Share site for you to print, read and **bring to class**. In addition, the following texts may be purchased at the BC bookstore or online:

Required books/software:

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Norton, 2007)
- John Carlson and Erik Owens, eds., *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics* (Georgetown, 2003)
- Michael Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War: Torture, Assassination, and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge, 2009)
- Martha Nussbaum and Joshua Cohen, *For Love of Country?* (Beacon, 2002)
- Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* [4e] (Basic Books, 2006)
- Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan and Monica Duffy Toft, eds. *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (Oxford 2012)
- All students need to install (or have access to) the latest version of the free **Google Earth** software.

Suggested readings are provided each class for those who want to dig deeper into the issues. You will not be responsible for this material on papers or your exam, though it will help you in class discussions as well as in your exams and papers. The books below are recommended but not required for purchase.

Recommended books:

- Glenn Carle, *The Interrogator: An Education* (Nation, 2010)
- E.J. Dionne, Jean Bethke Elshtain and Kayla Drogosz, *Liberty and Power: A Dialogue on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy in an Unjust World* (Brookings, 2004)
- John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (Oxford, 2011 2nd edition)
- Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Brookings, 2009)
- Eliza Griswold, *Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity & Islam* (FSG, 2010)
- Sohail Hashmi and Jack Miles, *Islamic Political Ethics* (Princeton, 2002)
- Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (Norton, 2011)

Suggested news sources to consult regularly:

- **Council on Foreign Relations: Religion & Foreign Policy Initiative** (www.cfr.org/religioninitiative)
The U.S. foreign policy Establishment. Their weekly email newsletters are highly recommended.
- **Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life** (www.pewforum.org)
Influential source for nonpartisan info, analysis and polls; their email newsletters are excellent.
- **The Immanent Frame** (<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif>)
Long-form blog posts on secularism, religion and the public sphere.
- **Weekly journals of record:** *Economist, Atlantic, New Yorker, Time*
- **International affairs sections of major media sites:**
Newspapers: *WaPo, NYT, WSJ, Boston Globe, CSM*; and foreign media when possible
Radio: BBC, NPR
Television: ABC/NBC/CBS, CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera English
- **Updated news on Arab revolutions:**
BBC News Arab Uprisings page (<http://bbc.in/rnCDAa>)
The Guardian interactive graphic: "The Path of Protest" (<http://bit.ly/rmZ9Fw>)
NY Times "Arab World Uprisings" (<http://nyti.ms/qPs89H>): [*updates ended July 17*]

Course recording:

Our regular (Mon/Wed) class sessions are being recorded as a trial of lecture capture technology at BC.

Disability services:

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan (617.552.8093 or dugganka@bc.edu) at Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD; or Paulette Durrett (617.552.3470 or paulette.durrett@bc.edu) in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

Academic integrity:

I don't need to elaborate on the obvious seriousness of academic integrity in an ethics course. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university's policy on this matter at www.bc.edu/integrity. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to your class dean and judged by the College's academic integrity committee. If you are found responsible for violating the policy, penalties may include a failing grade as well as possible probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the violation. Please talk to me or your class dean about any questions you may have.

SYLLABUS:

Part One: Religion and the Political Order

- (1) Wed 9/4 **Ethics, religion and international politics**
What's going on here?
- (2) Mon 9/9 **Religion and international relations theory**
Why was 9/11 a surprise to so many people?
- (3) Wed 9/11 **Secularization and secularism in international relations**
Is the world around us "secular"?
- (4) Mon 9/16 **Sovereignty: past, present, future**
Who's in charge here?
- (5) Wed 9/18 **Sovereignty: God and country**
What's God got to do with it?
- (6) Mon 9/23 **Human rights: the history of an idea**
Were human rights "invented"? Do human rights need God?
- (7) Wed 9/25 **State/religion in comparative perspective**
Why is religious freedom understood so differently around the world?

Part Two: Global Ethics and the Ethics of Globalization

- (8) Mon 9/30 **Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship**
Are political boundaries morally relevant? Who is our neighbor?
- (9) Wed 10/2 **Patriotism and national identity**
Who are "we" (and who are "them")?
- (10) Mon 10/7 **Human development and common goods**
Can we agree on what makes the good life possible?
- (11) Wed 10/9 **Religion and the Environment**
Are we called to conquer nature or care for it?
- *** Fri 10/11 **PAPER #1 DUE by 4:00 pm via email to Professor and TA**
- *** Mon 10/14 Columbus Day break
- (12) Wed 10/16 **Migration, refugees and the theology of open borders**
What does immigration policy say about a nation's values? Are open borders possible?
- (13) Mon 10/21 **Religion and U.S. foreign policy**
What is the State Department's new "religious engagement" effort about?
- *** Tue 10/22 **Panel discussion: U.S. Counter-Terrorism Strategy** (Fulton 511, 6:30-8:00pm)
Lecture by Col. James Q. Roberts (ret.), DoD office of Special Op/Combating Terrorism; response by Kenneth Himes, O.F.M., assoc. professor of theology @ BC
- (14) Wed 10/23 **International law and local justice**
Whose justice should prevail?

Part Three: Peace, Violence and the Use of Force

- (15) Mon 10/28 **Religious traditions of nonviolence**
*What kind of person is nonviolent in the face of injury and injustice?
Is self-immolation a nonviolent act?*
- (16) Wed 10/30 **Religious violence and terrorism**
What are religious terrorists thinking? Can violence ever be “religious”?
- (17) Mon 11/4 **Christian Realism**
Why is Reinhold Niebuhr so popular in the Obama era?
- (18) Wed 11/6 **Introducing the just war tradition**
Is war a moral act?
- (19) Mon 11/11 **Jus ad bellum**
Why go to war?
- (20) Wed 11/13 **Jus in bello**
Must war be hell?
- *** Fri 11/15 PAPER #2 DUE by 4:00 pm via email to Professor and TA**
- (21) Mon 11/18 **Targeted killing and assassination**
Is targeted killing a legitimate act of war? Are there any limits?
- (22) Wed 11/20 **Torture, interrogation and punishment**
Is torture ever justified?
- (23) Mon 11/25 **Drones and the era of remote killing**
What are the risks and rewards of automated warfare?
- *** Nov 27-29 Thanksgiving break
- (24) Mon 12/2 **Jus ad vim: sanctions, blockades, and sieges**
What coercive options exist short of war?
- (25) Wed 12/4 **Just Peace, jus post bellum and religious peacebuilding**
How can religion be/come a source of reconciliation?
- (26) Mon 12/9 **Case Study: Syria and the “Responsibility to Protect”**
What’s to be done in/to/for Syria?
- (27) Wed 12/11 **Conclusion**
So...what?
- *** Tue 12/17 **FINAL EXAM** 9am – 12pm in our regular room
Please plan your travel accordingly.