For God and Country?
Thinking about Religion and Citizenship
Theology 748601
Boston College, Spring 2015

Professor Erik Owens
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Course description:
This course explores the religious and ethical dimensions of citizenship, with particular attention to the points at which religious and political allegiances conflict or appear to conflict. With an eye toward the contemporary American context, we will draw upon diverse political philosophies, faith traditions, historical periods and geographic regions for insight. We will consider the nature of this conflict between God and country, attempts to resolve it in theory and practice, and contemporary issues that exemplify it. Among the many questions we will ask: Are patriotism and faith compatible? What is the difference between a good person and a good citizen? (Can we be one but not the other?) What are the limits of religious tolerance in a diverse society? How can we educate the next generation to sustain the values and institutions we hold dear?

Course requirements:
1. Participation (25%): Active and informed participation is crucial to understanding this material, so you will be graded on a balance of quality and quantity of participation. Diverse points of view will be presented in the course readings, and they are likewise welcomed in the ensuing discussion. The baseline expectation is that students will attend every class, complete all the required reading, contribute to class discussions, and submit assignments on time. In addition, you are expected to:
   a. Lead/begin class discussion of the readings at least once during the semester, drawing from your reflection paper (see below);
   b. Initiate 5 substantial discussions on our course web site and write a substantial comment on 5 others (by 5pm May 1);
   c. Attend two evening events (5:30-7:00pm) about religion/public life following our class meetings on Feb 12 (theologian Charles Marsh on Dietrich Bonhoeffer) and April 23 (State Dept official and theological ethicist Shaun Casey, on US foreign policy). Details on the Canvas site.

2. Weekly summary/reflection papers (25%): Each week students will write a one-page single-spaced paper reflecting on the assigned reading for that class. The paper will begin with an overview of the main theses (usually three or four) of the readings, followed by reflections and questions that the texts inspired. [More details about these papers will be given in the first class.]

3. Final paper (50%): due Friday May 8 before 5pm, via Canvas. Doctoral students will write 20-25 pages (5,000-6,000) words; Masters students will write approximately 15 pages (~3,750 words).

The grading scale:
A = excellent work  (A= 94-100; A- = 90-93)
B = good work     (B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83)
C = adequate work (C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73)
D = poor work     (D = 60-69)
F = inadequate or insufficient work  (59 & below)

TH 748601 syllabus (Spring 2015)
Laptop policy:

Laptops, tablets and other electronic devices should only be used in class to access electronic class assignments, not for note-taking, web surfing, email or social media. Extensive research over the last decade has proven that students better comprehend and retain material from classroom lectures and conversations when they write notes on paper than when they type notes on laptops or tablets. Digital distraction is only part of the issue; there is a large benefit to cognition and retention when you are forced to summarize more quickly and to physically write your notes.

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.

Course Texts:

Most of the course readings are posted electronically on our Canvas course site; others will be available as e-books through the library or as digital files from the authors themselves. Many of the assigned books will be on reserve at the library, as a backup to the electronic copy. I have not ordered books through the bookstore, but rather leave it to students to determine if they would rather purchase copies of some books that are otherwise available electronically.

That being said, some of the books will be useful in class and beyond (especially if you are beginning to build a library in this area), and I encourage you to consider purchasing them. We will discuss this in our first class meeting.

Suggested readings are also provided for each class session. While I do in fact suggest that you read each of these articles or books at some point, doing so each week would be an outsized accomplishment. I list them here primarily to offer additional bibliographical support for your research papers.
Course Schedule

(1) Jan 15: Setting the Stage

Required reading:


Recommended:

- Erik Owens, "Separation of Church and State," Boisi Papers on Religion & American Public Life, no.2. [This is a primer on American church/state law. The complete set of primers in the Boisi Center Papers is here.]

(2) Jan 22: Problems of American citizenship, in theory and practice

Required reading:


Recommended:

- Philip Hamburger, Separation of Church and State (Harvard 2002).

(3) Jan 29: Liberal theories of citizenship

Required reading:

Recommended:


(4) Feb 5: Civic republican theories of citizenship

**Required reading:**

- Iseult Honohan, *Civic Republicanism* (Routledge, 2002): introduction (1-14); selections from chaps 1-4; chap 5 (145-79). [71 pp total]
- Michael Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent*, chap 1(3-24) and Conclusion (317-351) [55 pp total]

**Recommended:**


(5) Feb 12: Prophetic republicanism and American civil religion

**Required reading:**


**Recommended:**

- Alan Wolfe, "Civil Religion Revisited: Quiet Faith in Middle-Class America," in *Obligations of Citizenship*, p. 32-72

**Required lecture:**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Prophetic Citizenship

*The 14th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture*

Charles Marsh, University of Virginia

Thursday, February 12, 2015 • 5:30-7:00PM • Higgins 300

Sponsored by the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life
(6) Feb 19: Patriotism, Cosmopolitanism and "Global Citizenship"

Required reading:

- Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Kansas, 2005), p. ix-xiv (preface) and 209-222 (conclusion).
- Martha Nussbaum et al., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Joshua Cohen, ed. (Beacon, 1996), p. vii-xiv (preface/intro), 1-37 (Nussbaum, Appiah, Barber), 66-71 (Gutmann), 78-84 (McConnell), 111-121 (Sen, Taylor), and 131-44 (Nussbaum). [~75 pp.]
- Peter Gomes, "Patriotism Is Not Enough," Memorial Church, Harvard University, 6 October 2002.

Recommended:

- Summaries of *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940) and *West Virginia State Board of Ed. v. Barnette* (1943)
- Watch “Religious Freedom and the Pledge of Allegiance” online at Boston College Front Row.
- Frederick Douglass, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852).

(7) Feb 26: The Benedict option

Required reading:


Recommended:

- Peter J. Leithart, "Witness unto Death: Christian Martyrdom Conquers the Pretensions of Worldly Power," *First Things* January 2013

(8) Mar 12: Christian Realism

Required reading:

- Reinhold Niebuhr, selections from *Love and Justice: The Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Westminster/JKP 1992)

Recommended:

- Martin Luther, “On Temporal Authority” (1523).
(9) Mar 19:  **Augustinian Christian republicanism**

** Seminar paper proposals due **

Required reading:


Recommended:


(10) Mar 26:  **Augustinian civic liberalism**

Required reading:


Recommended:

(11) Apr 9:  **Civic education and religious freedom**

Required reading:


Recommended:

- Kent Greenawalt, *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* (Princeton, 2005), 1-34.
(12) Apr 16: The politics of religion and citizenship

Required Reading:

- John F. Kennedy, “Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association” (1960)
- Voters Guides:
  - Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, “Get out the Vote 2008.”

Recommended:

- Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence" (1979)

(13) Apr 23: Political Organizing as Faithful Citizenship

** Seminar paper outlines due **

Required reading:


Recommended:

- Jeffrey Stout, Blessed Are the Organized (xxx), 1-xx.

(14) Apr 30: Prophetic religion and civil disobedience

Required reading:

- Packet of theological/political responses to Ferguson 2014/2015 (from Ta Nahisi-Coates, Cornell West, Michael Eric Dyson, and others)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)
- Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776)
Recommended:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963).
- Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849)

May 8: Final papers due

- Upload seminar papers to Canvas by 4pm