Ethics, Religion and International Politics
International Studies 600 / Theology 563
Boston College, Spring 2009
Mon/Wed 3:00 - 4:15pm

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

Course Themes:

Part 1  Religion and the Political Order
Secularism; religion and IR theory; sovereignty (x2); religion, ethics and U.S. foreign policy (x2); religion and state.

Part 2  Global Ethics and the Ethics of Globalization
Cosmopolitanism and patriotism (x2); human rights (x2); international law and local justice; religious perspectives on pluralism; the globalization of ethics; religion and politics in the global south; political economy and economic justice.

Part 3  Peace, Violence and the Use of Force
The just war tradition; war and peace in Islam; Christian realism; genocide and humanitarian intervention; religion and terrorism (x2); torture; religion and peacebuilding.

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

• 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)
• Sohail H. Hashmi, ed., Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism and Conflict (Princeton, 2002)
• Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars [4e] (Basic Books, 2006)

Suggested readings about many topics are provided for those would want to dig deeper into the issues. You will not be responsible for this material on papers or your exam, though it will likely prove helpful for those endeavors as well as our class discussions.
You should consult a variety of news sources regularly throughout the week. My suggestions:

- **Council on Foreign Relations** (www.cfr.org)
  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://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame)
  Long-form blog posts on secularism, religion and the public sphere.

- **Muslim-West Facts Initiative** (www.muslimwestfacts.com)
  Gallup World Poll of opinion leaders in the West and the Muslim world

- **Weekly newsmagazines**: Economist, Atlantic, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek

- **International affairs sections of major media sites**:
  - Newspapers: WaPo, NYT, WSJ, Boston Globe, CSM; foreign papers if you read the language;
  - Radio: BBC, NPR;

**Course requirements:**

1. **Participation and presentations (10%)**: Active and informed participation is crucial to understanding this material, so you will be graded on a balance of quality and quantity of participation. In addition, you are expected to attend each class, complete all the required reading, contribute to class discussions, and submit assignments on time.

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 Feb 16 & Apr 6.

3. **Final exam (40%)**: Closed-book, in-class, comprehensive final exam at the date/time established by the university registrar. A 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)

**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 academic integrity committee in your school. 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 about any questions you may have.
Syllabus

COURSE INTRODUCTION

(1) Wed 1/14: Ethics, Religion and International Politics

   What’s religion got to do with it?

   Required: • News items: Recent articles and op-ed pieces on the war in Gaza

   *** January 19: Martin Luther King Day (No class) ***

PART ONE: RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL ORDER

(2) Wed 1/21: Religion and international relations theory

   Why was 9/11 a surprise to so many people?

   • News item: Olivier Roy and Justin Vaise, “How to Win Islam Over,” *WSJ* 12.21.08.


(3) Mon 1/26: Secularization and secularism in international relations

   Is the world around us “secular”?

   • Alan Wolfe, “And the Winner Is…” *The Atlantic* 301:2 (March 2008).


   Who’s in charge here?

   Required: • Carlson/Owens, “Reconsidering Westphalia’s Legacy for Religion and International Politics,” in *The Sacred and the Sovereign* (Georgetown, 2003), 1-19 [skim 28-34].
   • John Kelsay, “Justice, Political Authority, and Armed Conflict: Challenges to Sovereignty and the Just Conduct of War,” in *Sacred + Sovereign*, 113-36.
   • Packet on “Responsibility to Protect.”
   • News item: [TBA on R2P]

(5) Mon 2/2: **Sovereignty: Thinking Theologically about Boundaries**

*How should we define the “us” and “them”?*

**Required:**
- News item: [TBA: sovereignty in Kosovo and Gaza]

**Suggested:**
- Fred Dallmayr, “Sacred Non-Sovereignty,” in *Sacred + Sovereign*, 256-64.

(6) Wed 2/4: **Religion/Church and state relations in comparative perspective**

*Which is the outlier: the United States or Europe?*

**Required:**
- Stephen Monsma and Christopher Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies* 2e (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 1-15 [Introduction] and 213-240 [Chapter 7].
- List of religion-state relations around the world.
- News item: [TBA on challenges to state religion]

**Suggested:**

(7) Mon 2/9: **Religion, ethics and U.S. foreign policy**

*Is a “moral foreign policy” irresponsible—and thus immoral?*

**Required:**
- News item: [TBA]

**Suggested:**
- Louise Richardson, “Fighting against Terrorism and for Justice,” *Liberty and Power*, 53-70
(8) Wed 2/11: U.S. foreign policy in the Obama administration
What will an Obama Doctrine look like?

Required:
• Noah Feldman, What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building (Princeton, 2006), excerpt TBA.
• News items: Feldman, “Fighting the Last War,” NYT 11.28.08; Parsons, McCormick & Nichols, “Obama Plans to Reach out to Muslim World,” ChiTrib 12.09.08.

Suggested:

PART TWO: GLOBAL ETHICS AND THE ETHICS OF GLOBALIZATION

(9) Mon 2/16: Political economy and economic justice
[PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS]
What makes the good life possible?

Required:
• Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (Anchor, 2000), Preface + chaps 1 and/or 2.
• News item: [TBA]

Suggested:
• Martha Nussbaum, Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach (Cambridge, 2000), excerpt TBA.

(10) Wed 2/18: Sovereignty, ethics and American exceptionalism
[Guest Speaker: Jean Bethke Elshtain, University of Chicago]
By what authority are nations established and defended?

Required:
• Robert Gallucci, “Weighing Sovereignty in the ‘Sit Room’: Does It Enter or End the Debate?” in Sacred + Sovereign, 235-46.
• News item: [TBA]
• After class, students should attend the Boisi Center’s panel on “Realism, Ethics, and U.S. Foreign Policy” (with J.B. Elshtain, Bryan Hehir and Andrew Bacevich) in Higgins 300, from 4:30 to 6:00pm.

Suggested:
• Andrew Bacevich, The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism (Metropolitan, 2008)
(11) Mon 2/23: **Cosmopolitanism and patriotism (part 1)**

*Who is our neighbor?*

**Required:**
- News item: [TBA]

**Suggested:**

(12) Wed 2/25: **Cosmopolitanism and patriotism (part 2)**

*Are political boundaries morally relevant?*

**Required:**
- Michael McConnell, “Don’t Neglect the Little Platoons,” in *For Love of Country*, 78-84
- News item: [TBA]

*** March 2-5: Spring Break ***

(13) Mon 3/9: **International law and local justice**

*[Guest speaker: Hauwa Ibrahim, Harvard University / Lagos, Nigeria]*

*Whose justice should prevail?*

**Required:**
- Reading TBA: Carlson on limited/local justice
- News items: Elaine Sciolino, “Britain Grapples With Role for Islamic Justice” *NYT* 11-18-08; and [TBA: ICC indictment of Sudanese president; other African updates]

**Suggested:**
- Suggested readings TBA

(14) Wed 3/11: **Human Rights: The history of an idea**

*Were human rights “invented”?*

**Required:**
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

**Suggested:**
- Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (London, 1980)
- Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (Cairo, 1990)
- The Bangkok Declaration (Bangkok, 1993)
- Asian Human Rights Charter: A People’s Charter (Kwangju, South Korea, 1998)
(15) Mon 3/16: Human rights and God

Are human rights religious and/or universal?

Required:  
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Irony of It All,” The Hedgehog Review 9.3 (Fall 2007), 63-69.
- News item: [TBA]

Suggested:  

(16) Wed 3/18: Religion and politics in the global south

[Guest speaker: Timothy Shah, Boston University]

Are Pentecostals theocrats?

Required:  
- Timothy Shah article TBA
- News item: [TBA]

Suggested:  
- Suggested reading TBA

PART THREE: PEACE, VIOLENCE AND THE USE OF FORCE

(17) Mon 3/23: Nonviolence in the Christian Tradition

Is pacifism nonviolent?

Required:  
- News item: [TBA]

Suggested:  
- Stanley Hauerwas, Should War Be Eliminated? (Marquette, 1984)

(18) Wed 3/25: The just war tradition: ad bellum considerations

Is war a moral act?

Required:  
- News item: [TBA on justifications for wars in Iraq/Afghanistan/Gaza]

Suggested:  
- “What We’re Fighting For: A Letter from America,” Feb 2002.
(19) Mon 3/30:  The just war tradition: *in bello* considerations

*Must war be hell?*

**Required:**
- Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 127-59, 176-96, 251-68 [Chaps 8-9, 11, 16 (~65pp)].
- News item: Steven Erlanger, "A Gaza War Full of Traps and Trickery," *NYT* 01.11.09

**Suggested:**

(20) Wed 4/1:  War and peace in Islam

*Is jihad an ethic of restraint?*

**Required:**
- News item: [TBA]

**Suggested:**

(21) Mon 4/6:  Christian Realism

*[PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS]*

*Why is Reinhold Niebuhr so popular in the post-Bush era?*

**Required:**
- News item: David Brooks on Obama and Niebuhr (NYT 2008).

**Suggested:**

(22) Wed 4/8:  Genocide and humanitarian intervention

*What happened to “Never again”?*

**Required:**
- Samantha Power, "A Problem from Hell": *America and the Age of Genocide* (Perennial, 2003), xi-xxi, 503-16 [preface and conclusion]
- News item: "Darfur, Another Year Later," *NYT* editorial, 11 Dec 2008

**Suggested:**

*** April 9-13: Easter Weekend ***

(23) Wed 4/15:  Religion and Terrorism

*What are religious terrorists thinking?*

**Required:**
- News item: Martha Nussbaum and William Kristol on the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

**Suggested:**
(24) Mon 4/20: Religion and Terrorism

Can violence ever be “religious”?

Required:
- Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God: Choose either chapter 3, 5, or 6; all read chapter 11.
- News item: [TBA]


Is torture ever justified?

Required:
- News item: [Obama exec orders on torture, trials and Guantanamo Bay]

Suggested:

(26) Mon 4/27: Religion and Peacebuilding

How can religion be a source of reconciliation?

Required:
- Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Politics and Forgiveness,” in Burying the Past, 45-64.
- News item: [TBA]

Suggested:

(27) Wed 4/29: Conclusion

So, what?

Required:
- News item: [TBA]

Day & time TBA: Final Exam