

CITIZENSHIP

in American Political Theology and Political Philosophy

Theology 7487 Boston College, Spring 2017

Professor Erik Owens

Class meets: Thursdays 2:00-4:30pm
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Office: Boisi Center, 24 Quincy Rd.
Office Hours: Tue. 9am - 12pm & by appt.
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Course description:

This seminar explores the religious and ethical dimensions of citizenship, with 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 and political theologies for insight on 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: How comprehensive are civic values and civic obligations? Are there theological warrants for civic participation? How do contemporary liberal and civic republican philosophies envision good citizenship? 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? And what does a Trump presidency mean for the ethics of citizenship?

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. Use the Canvas discussions feature to post and discuss relevant articles or comment on class discussions, and to engage one another in replies;
 - c. Attend three of the related campus events noted at end of this syllabus.
- 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 (no more than 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 Thursday May 11 by 6pm, via Canvas. Doctoral students will write approximately 20 pages (5,000 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)

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 your school'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:

Required readings: 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 also be placed on physical reserve at the library. **I have not ordered books through the bookstore**, but rather leave it to students to determine if you 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.

For book acquisition purposes, you should know that we will read substantial portions of these books:

- Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy* (Cambridge UP, 2015)
- Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago 2008)
- Iseult Honohan, *Civic Republicanism* (Routledge, 2002)
- Cathleen Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square* (Harvard, 2016)
- Vincent Lloyd, *Black Natural Law* (Oxford 2016)
- Robin Lovin, Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism (Cambridge, 1995)
- Martha Nussbaum et al., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Beacon, 1996)
- Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge, 2007)

Recommended 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

<u>Class</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Jan 19	Setting the Stage
2	Jan 26	American citizenship, in theory and practice
3	Feb 2	Liberal theories of citizenship
4	Feb 9	Civic republican theories of citizenship
5	Feb 16	Civil religion
6	Feb 23	Nationalism and cosmopolitanism
7	Mar 2	The Benedict option <i>NB Meeting time TBD</i>
-	Mar 9	No class – Spring Break
8	Mar 16	Christian Realism <i>NB Meeting time TBD</i>
9	Mar 23	Augustinian Christian republicanism
-	Mar 26	Class dinner, Chez Owens
10	Mar 30	Augustinian civic liberalism <i>NB Seminar paper proposal due</i>
11	Apr 6	Black Natural Law
-	Apr 13	No class – Easter break
12	Apr 20	Civility and prophetic religion
13	Apr 27	Political organizing as faithful citizenship <i>NB Seminar paper outline due</i>
14	May 4	Global citizenship?
-	May 11	<i>NB Seminar paper due</i>

Related campus events

*Items marked with * are required:*

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| * | Feb 1 | "An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story" Documentary screening and panel discussion. (Simboli 100 [STM], 5:30pm) |
| * | Feb 23 | Lecture by Melissa Rogers, Special Assistant to President Obama, Executive Director, White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (Higgins 300, 6pm) |
| | Mar 22 | The Inaugural Wolfe Lecture on Religion and Public Life, by Alan Wolfe, Founding Director of the Boisi Center for Religion & American Public Life (Fulton 511, 7pm) |
| * | Apr 7 | Panel discussion of Cathleen Kaveny's <i>Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square</i> , with Rowan Williams, Charles Taylor, and Jonathan Lear. (Details TBA) |
| | Apr 11 | Erik Owens, "The Ethics of Citizenship in the Trump Era," lunch colloquium. (Boisi Center 12pm) |