For God and Country?
Thinking about Religion and Citizenship
Theology 486
Boston College, Fall 2008

Professor Erik Owens
Class meets: Tuesdays 1:30-4:00pm
email: erik.owens@bc.edu

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?

Required Texts:
Most of the course readings are articles or chapters that will be posted electronically on our course site on BC Share. The following texts have been ordered at the BC bookstore, and are also on reserve at the library:

- Derek Heater, A Brief History of Citizenship (NYU, 2004).

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. You will not be expected to read them, and you will not be tested on them.

Course requirements:
1. Participation: 10% of your grade will be based on your participation in class discussions. Diverse points of view will be presented in the course readings, and they are likewise welcomed in the ensuing discussion. In the interest of maintaining an ongoing, constructive dialogue about topics that can be rather contentious, you are expected to demonstrate mutual respect and civility in the classroom.

2. Reflection papers: Two reflection papers, each approximately 1,000 words in length and worth 15% of your grade, will be due on the Friday following completion of Parts 1 and 2 of the class. You will be asked to draw upon the readings in that section of the course to reflect upon a choice of topics provided by the instructor.

3. Student presentations: Students (alone or in pairs, depending on enrollment) will lead the class discussions in Part 3 of the course. This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade. You will be graded on your knowledge of the texts, ability to summarize it for the class, and the questions you pose for discussion, all of which should be reflected in a summary document you post on the course wiki. You will select the topic of your presentation early in the semester to give you ample time to prepare.
4. **Final paper:** You are required to construct a well-written scholarly argument (~15pp for undergrads, ~20pp for grad students) about an aspect of religion and citizenship that you find challenging, compelling, or curious. Topics are subject to approval by the professor; paper proposals must be submitted by class 12 (November 18), and the final paper is due—in print—by 4pm on Tuesday December 16. Your paper must draw upon the course readings; although additional research is welcomed when appropriate, it is neither required nor expected. This assignment is worth **40% of your final course grade.**

**Course Outline**

**Part 1: Citizenship as a legal, political and civic concept**

1. **Sep 2:** Introduction: What is citizenship?
2. **Sep 9:** Civic republican theories of citizenship
3. **Sep 16:** Civic liberal theories of citizenship
4. **Sep 23:** Civil religion and church-state separation in the United States
5. **Sep 30:** Contemporary American citizenship

**Oct 1:** *short reflection paper due*

**Part 2: Religious reflection on civic obligation**

6. **Oct 7:** The sacred and secular in political theology and theological politics
7. **Oct 14:** Theologies of public life
8. **Oct 21:** The rhetorical politics of church and state
9. **Oct 28:** Religious voter guides as public theology

**Oct 31:** *short reflection paper due*

**Part 3: Religion and citizenship in conflict**

10. **Nov 4:** Religious freedom and free speech
11. **Nov 11:** Religious freedom and public education
12. **Nov 18:** Patriotism

*Paper proposal due*

13. **Nov 25:** Prophetic religion and civil disobedience
14. **Dec 2:** (a) The family as civic and religious institution
    (b) Conclusion: Thinking about religion and citizenship

**Dec 16:** *Final paper due*
PART ONE: CITIZENSHIP AS A LEGAL, POLITICAL AND CIVIC CONCEPT

(1) Sep 2: What is citizenship?

Required reading:
• None.

Suggested reading:

(2) Sep 9: Civic republican theories of citizenship

Required reading:

Suggested reading:

(3) Sep 16: Civic liberal theories of citizenship

Required reading:
• Derek Heater, A Brief History of Citizenship, p. 65-87.
• John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration (1685), excerpts.

Suggested reading:
• John Rawls, Political Liberalism (Columbia, 1993).
• Alan Wolfe, The Future of Liberalism (Knopf, 2009).
(4) Sep 23: Civil religion and church-state separation in the United States

Required reading:
• Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address” (1865)

Suggested reading:
• Philip Hamburger, Separation of Church and State (Harvard, 2002).
• Alan Wolfe, “Civil Religion Revisited: Quiet Faith in Middle-Class America,” in Obligations of Citizenship, p. 32-72

(5) Sep 30: Contemporary American citizenship

Required reading:

Suggested reading:

Oct 3: Reflection paper #1 due
• Electronic submission by 3pm.
PART TWO: RELIGIOUS REFLECTIONS ON CIVIC OBLIGATION

(6) Oct 7:

**The sacred and secular in political theology and theological politics**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested reading:**


Oct 9, 4:30p  
Boisi Center panel discussion: **“Catholics and the 2008 Election”**  
Devlin 101  
with Amy Sullivan, Michael Sean Winters, and Alan Wolfe

(7) Oct 14:

**Theologies of public life**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested reading:**

- Martin Luther, “On Temporal Authority” (1523).

(8) Oct 21:

**The rhetorical politics of church and state**

**Required reading:**

- John F. Kennedy, “Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association” (1960)

**Suggested reading:**

- Selections from the Christian Gospels and Pauline letters: Matthew 5 and Luke 6 (Sermon on the Mount/Plain and Beatitudes); Mark 12.13-17, Luke 20.20-26, Matthew 22.15-22 (Paying
taxes); John 18.33-37, 19.19-22 (earthly and divine kingship); Romans 13 (obedience to authorities).

- Selections from the Torah and Prophets: Exodus 20-23 (Decalogue and Covenant Code); Amos (entire); Jeremiah 31.31-34 (new covenant).

(9) Oct 28: Religious voter guides as public theology
- Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, “Get out the Vote 2008.”

Oct 31: Reflection paper #2 due
- Electronic submission by 3pm.

PART THREE: RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP IN CONFLICT

(10) Nov 4: Religious freedom and free speech

Required reading:
- Adam Liptak, “Unlike Others, U.S. Defends Freedom to Offend in Speech,” NYT 06-12-08

Suggested reading:
- John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (1863)

Nov 6, 4:30p Boisi Center panel discussion: Election 2008 Analysis & Discussion
Devlin 101 with Alan Wolfe, Kay Schlozman and Marc Landy
(11) Nov 11: Religious freedom and public education

**Required reading:**

- Kent Greenawalt, *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* (Princeton, 2005), 1-34.

**Suggested reading:**


Nov 13, 4:30p  “American Secularism for American Muslims: Challenges and Prospects”
Devlin 101  Abdullahi An-Na'im, Emory University
*The 9th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture, The Boisi Center*

(12) Nov 18: Patriotism

*** Paper proposals due ***

**Required reading:**

- 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.]
- Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Kansas, 2005), p. ix-xiv (preface) and 209-222 (conclusion).
- Summaries of *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940) and *West Virginia State Board of Ed. v. Barnette* (1943)
- Peter Gomes, “Patriotism Is Not Enough,” Sermon at the Memorial Church, Harvard University, 6 October 2002.

**Suggested reading:**

- Watch “Religious Freedom and the Pledge of Allegiance” online at Boston College Front Row, http://fronrow.bc.edu/program/newdow/
- Frederick Douglass, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852).
(13) Nov 25: Prophetic religion and civil disobedience

Required reading:
• Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963).
• Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776)

Suggested reading:
• Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849)
• Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)

(14) Dec 2: (a) The family as civic and religious institution

Required reading:
• Packet of articles on the challenge of sharia courts in liberal democracies.

Suggested reading:

(b) Conclusion: Thinking about religion and citizenship

Required reading:
• None.

Dec 16: Final papers due

• Print copies only; deliver to my office by 4pm