

RECU 70970/80970/90970 Religion and Politics: Historical, Theological, and Comparative Perspectives

Three Semester Hours

Course: M-F 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

May 23-27, 2022

Instructor: David R. Brockman, Ph.D.

Prerequisites:

- M.Div. & M.T.S.: One 60000-level course in Christian Theology
- Th.M, D.Min., Ph.D.: Admission to program

Description of Content:

This course explores the interrelation between religion, politics, and theological reflection, especially in light of the 2020 election season. It pays special attention on the history of Christian thought about politics, its role in U.S. political culture, and comparison with similar issues in Muslim political thought. The course will examine the following questions: How has Christian thought about political issues developed over time, and how has it shaped American political life? What place, if any, should religion have in politics? How do Christian approaches to the political compare with Muslim approaches? How might theological reflection inform political activity in the U.S. without violating church-state separation? In addition to exploring the history and development of Christian political thought, this course allows students to reflect theologically on critical issues facing society and the church today, including race, gender, sexuality, education, and environmental concerns. Students listen deeply to voices across the political spectrum, reflect theologically upon them, and develop their own theological-political positions.

Class Procedures:

Lectures, discussions, and group work.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and informed participation in the class sessions
2. Pre-Course Book Outlines (due on May 23)
3. In-Class Group Projects
4. Religion and Politics in the News: Each student will submit one news item from the past month that shows the interaction of religion and politics in the current political debate. Each student should be prepared to very briefly summarize her news item, and if possible, draw connections with themes covered in the course.
5. Deep Listening Research Paper: Students will identify a political position different from their own, thoroughly research that position, and, in a paper of **1800 to 2400 words** (for 70970; 2000-3000 words for 80970/90970), develop their own theological argument for opposing it. The paper must demonstrate that the author understands the reasoning underlying their opponents' position as well as her own.

Texts:

1. Kenneth Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 8th ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). ISBN: 978-1-5381-0513-9. Price: \$68.00. (Or E-book: ISBN: 978-1-5381-0514-6. Price: \$64.50.)
2. Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Macmillan, 2012). ISBN: 978-0-5672-6354-4. Price: \$28.75.

Other readings (including the required text *Dialectical Democracy through Christian Thought: Individualism, Relationalism, and American Politics*) will be available online or on reserve in the Mary Coats Burnett Library.

Grading Procedures:

Class Participation	10%
Pre-Course Book Outlines	20%
In-Class Group Projects	20%
News Item	10%
Deep Listening Paper	40%