Contemporary Political Theory: Post-Secularism

Post-Secularism? Many political theorists today are thinking about ways to allow religion a voice in politics and in the formation of public policy that does not violate the constitutional separations between church and state. “Post-secularists” believe that the formal separation between church and state has forced religion into a political role outside the political checks of the public sphere, and that by bringing religion into the public sphere it would become one voice among many others legitimately competing for political influence in key policy areas. This course will examine some of the traditional arguments about the relationship between church and state and the role of religion in American politics, and new post-secularist arguments about the position and power religion has had in the American political system and the ways its political role can be revised in a post-secularist public sphere.

Requirements

There will be a midterm and final examination, each valued at 40% of the final grade. Attendance and participation account for the remaining 20% of the final grade. Regular participation in class discussions is required. REGARDLESS OF GRADES ON EXAMINATIONS, no student will receive the grade of ‘A’ or ‘B’ in this class without a record of regular class participation. Reading assignments are due on the dates below for which assigned pages are given. Unannounced quizzes on reading assignments may be given.

Attendance will be taken each class. Students are permitted three absences only from class. Additional absences require a formal excused absence from the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. Students may bring beverages to class, but are not permitted to eat any sort of food during class time. Class begins promptly at the designated time. No one is to arrive late, as it is disruptive to class proceedings.
No make-up examinations will be given without a documented excuse for a medical or family emergency from the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. No incompletes will be given in this course. All work must be completed by the official end of the term unless the appropriate excuse is provided.

**Required Readings** (available at Mary Jane Books, Quail & Western, unless indicated otherwise)

Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Mill, *On Liberty*

Whitman, *Song of Myself* (handout)

Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (excerpts; handout)

Hauerwas & Coles, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary*

Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity American Style*

**Reading Assignments**


August 27 & 29, no class (Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association)

Week 2. September 1, no class (Labor Day).

September 3 & 5, Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* (all)

Week 3. September 8, 10, & 12.

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. I, part 2, chs. 6, 7, 8;

Week 4. September 15, 17, 19.

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II, part 1, chs. 5, 6, 7;

part 2, chs. 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 15.


Mill, *On Liberty* (all)

Week 6. September 29 & October 1, no class.

October 3, midterm examination.

Week 7. October 6, 8 & 10, no class (Jewish Holidays)
Week 8. October 13, 15, & 17.

Whitman, *Song of Myself* (all)


Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (excerpts; handout)

Week 10. October 27, 29, & 31.

Hauerwas & Coles, chs. 1-5.


Hauerwas & Coles, chs. 6-10.

Week 12. November, 10, 12, & 14.

Hauerwas & Coles, chs. 11-15.


Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity American Style* (chapters to be announced)

Week 14. November 24. (No class November 26 & 28, Thanksgiving Holidays)

Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity American Style* (chapters to be announced)

Week 15. December 1, 3, 5.

Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity American Style* (chapters to be announced)