INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEOLOGY

I. Course Summary & Objectives

a. The reason for this course is summed up by Oliver O’Donovan: ‘Theology must be political if it is to be evangelical. Rule out the political questions and you cut short the proclamation of God's saving power’.¹ This course seeks to help our theology in the public square by attempting to discern a more biblically faithful understanding of the ‘political’

b. The aim of this course is to serve as an introduction to the discipline of political theology, an area of study that reflects broadly upon the nature of how humans relate to God. ‘The political is understood as the use of structural power to organize a society or community of people... Political theology is, then, the analysis and criticism of political arrangements from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways with the world’.²

c. To orient and familiarize the student to the theological categories such as church, state, politics – ancient and modern – and how such categories inform and shape different ideas of how the church engages the world

d. The goal of the class is twofold:

   i. To prepare those entering ministry a biblical and theological model for constructive, informed and wise participation in their local communities

   ii. To offer a theological account of both the church’s role as well as the individual believer’s role in society and the beliefs and ideas that contribute to this vision

II. Course Requirements

a. Class Participation: includes attendance of all classes and active participation and contribution in class discussion

¹ O’Donovan, Desire of the Nations, p. 3
² Cavanaugh and Scott, Blackwell Companion to Political Theology, p. 2
b. *Readings:* This is a heavy reading course which is reflected in the grading scale. Readings should be completed before they are considered and discussed in class. All readings not listed in the required reading section will be found on reserve.

c. *Theological Research Paper:* Students will write a 12–15-page paper (typed, double- spaced, 12 pt. font). The paper must treat a topic discussed in class and bring it into dialogue with a broadly construed account of political theology from a Reformed point of view. To make the essay more specific in nature, please consult your instructor to discuss this. Standard SBL format ought to be followed. Footnotes to be used (not endnotes). An objective for students is to marshal resources strategically and to unfold an argument in a disciplined manner. Lengthy papers demonstrate an undisciplined argument. Keep the length within the boundaries suggested.

III. **Required Texts**


   c. * A packet of readings will be provided on canvas

IV. **Recommended Texts**


V. **Grading Overview**

   a. Reading Report: 50%
   b. Theological Research Paper: 50%

VI. **Grading System**

   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>GPA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(97-100)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(94-96)</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(91-93)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(88-90)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(86-87)</td>
<td>2.66</td>
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VII. Lecture Outline

* The readings and topics are subject to revision by the professor. Any changes will be highlighted by the professor.

a. Lecture 1: Introduction: Identity of Political Theology & Virtues of the Political Theologian

b. Lecture 2: The Bible and Politics

Reading:

- Matthew 22:15-22; Romans 13 and Revelation 13

- Richard Bauckham, ‘Reading the Bible Politically’ in The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically (SPCK, 2011), pp. 1-19

c. Lecture 3: The Dilemma for Political Theology Today

Reading:

- William Cavanaugh, “‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House’: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State”. Modern Theology 11, no. 4 (October 1995), 397-420

- Rowan Williams, ‘Has Secularism Failed?’ in Rowan Williams, Faith in the Public Square (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 11-22


d. Lecture 4 – The Emergence of Political Theology: A Starting Point

Reading:

- The Donation of Constantine (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/donatconst.asp) (See O’Donovan, Sourcebook, 228-30)

- Epistle to Diognetus (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.x.i.ii.html)

e. Lecture 5 – Historical Understandings & Theological Paradigms ~ Part 1: A Tale of the Two: Two Cities

Reading:

- Augustine, City of God: 11.2; 14.28; 15.1-2; 19.1, 5-28

- Augustine, Letter 189, 220

f. Lecture 6 – Historical Understandings & Theological Paradigms ~ Part 2: A Tale of the Two: The King’s Two Bodies

Reading:


- Gelasius I, ‘Letter to Emperor Anastasius’ in O’Donovan, From Irenaeus to Grotius, pp. 177-79

- Gregory VII, Dictatus Papae and Letter 8.21 in O’Donovan, From Irenaeus to Grotius, pp. 240-49

g. Lecture 7 – Historical Understandings & Theological Paradigms ~ Part 4: Luther’s Two Kingdoms
Reading:

- O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 581-608

h. Lecture 8 – Historical Understandings & Theological Paradigms ~ Part 5: Calvin’s Two Kingdoms...?

Reading:

- Calvin, ‘Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France’ in *Institutes*, 9-32
- Calvin, *Institutes* IV.XX
- O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 662-84

i. Lecture 9 – More Reformers – Rights, Conscience, Rebellion & Resistance & the Magistrate

Reading:

- *The Magdeburg Confession*, translated by Matthew Colvin and Introduced by George Grant, pp. 1-9
- *Vindiciae, contra Tyrannos* in O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 711-22
- Althusius, *Politica* in O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, pp. 757-70

Recommended:


ej. Lecture 10 – Reformed Paradigms for Political Theology

Reading:

- David Van Drunen, Living in God’s Two Kingdoms (Crossway, 2010), [selections]


- Oliver O’Donovan, Desire of the Nations (Selected Reading)

k. Lecture 11 – America, The Church & Political Life (Realism & Idealism)

Reading:


l. Lecture 12 – Political Theology in the Public Square

Reading:

- Cavanaugh, “‘Killing for the Telephone Company’: Why the Nation-State is Not the Keeper of the Common Good’ in Migrations of the Holy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 7-45


m. Lecture 13 – Political Theology Looking Forward
# Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

**With Mini-Justification**

**Course:** Introduction to Political Theology (ST6405)  
**Professor:** Dr. Mark I. McDowell  
**Campus:** Orlando  
**Date:** Summer 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></td>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic</td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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