

# Boyce College of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Religion in the Public Square – PH 321

Fall, 2008

Thursday, 11:30AM – 2:15PM

Travis Kerns, Professor

Brad Weldy, Garrett Fellow

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“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Colossians 2:8, NASB

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This syllabus contains important information relative to this class, including requirements, grading scale, and policies. Be sure to keep it and refer to it when you have any questions. You are held accountable for the information in this syllabus.

- Course Description (from the Boyce College catalog)
  - This course is designed to introduce students to key issues in the interface between religion and political thought, such as the nature of government, the historic role of politics, and the relationship between religion and political issues. It will give special attention to the relationship between church and state and the crisis of moral authority in American society.
  
- Course Objectives
  - To provide students with a basic understanding of various political philosophies and how those philosophies impact various systems of government.
  - To provide students with the ability to evaluate and analyze the worldviews of various political philosophies and political systems.
  - To provide students with a practical understanding of how various political systems work.
  - To provide students with an understanding of the various theories of the proper relationship which should exist between politics and individual Christians.
  - To provide students with an understanding of the various theories of the proper relationships which should exist between the government and the church.
  - To help students formulate a personal theory on their relationship to culture and politics and the relationship of the church to culture and politics.

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- The student will be encouraged to integrate this material into his or her own ministry of teaching and to employ the insights learned here to enhance worship, evangelism, and devotion to God. The student will be further challenged to engage both believers and unbelievers in a rational defense of the Christian faith along the lines of the material studied in this course.
- Professor's Objectives
  - The professor will attempt to develop in the students an appreciation for this material through well-organized and interesting lectures and group discussions. The reading assignments have been chosen for their incisiveness, not merely for the covering of perfunctory material.
  - The professor will make every attempt to demonstrate the abiding validity and importance of this material through practical applications and critical dialogue.
  - The professor will evaluate students' participation through their fulfillment of class assignments and testing.
  - The professor will attempt to meet the objectives of the students in the class.
- Required Textbooks
  - Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. Simon & Schuster.
  - Colson, Charles. *God & Government*. Zondervan.
  - George, Robert and Christopher Tollefsen. *Embryo*. Doubleday.
  - Prothero, Stephen. *Religious Literacy*. Harper.
  - Wallis, Jim. *The Great Awakening*. Harper.
- Assignments
  - The student will be expected to keep up with all assignments in the course schedule.
  - The student will be responsible for the material given in class lectures. There will be two exams, the questions for which will be taken from the classroom presentations and/or the textbook assignments.
  - Students will be given regular reading assignments from the textbook which will aid the student in understanding the classroom lectures. The reading material will be referenced during the classroom lectures and some discussion will be based on the readings. There are about 1000 pages of reading for this class, which averages to about 100 pages per week. Students should plan their reading schedule accordingly.

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- Students will write critical book reviews of the following textbooks: *The Closing of the American Mind*, *Religious Literacy*, *God & Government*. The reviews should be 4-6 pages each (2-3 pages summary and 2-3 pages critical evaluation) and must conform to *The Southern Seminary Manual of Style*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.
- Students will summarize three significant political issues each week of class from any of the sources listed below. The summary of each political issue should include the following: a summary of the event, any bias displayed by the reporter or author of the article, the importance of the political issue to Christians, the key political figures involved in the issue, how the political issue comports with a biblical worldview, and whether the student supports or opposes the issue. Summaries will be collected on the final day of class.
  - Newspapers (available in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library)
    - *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Courier-Journal*
  - Newsmagazines (available in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library)
    - *Newsweek*, *U. S. News and World Report*, *Time*, *World*, *National Review*, or *Nation*
  - Television News
    - Fox News, CNN, Headline News, CNBC, ABC World News Tonight, NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News
  - News Websites
    - The Drudge Report ([www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)), Breit Bart ([www.breitbart.com](http://www.breitbart.com)), Fox News ([www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)), CNN ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)), CNBC ([www.cnbc.com](http://www.cnbc.com))
- No examinations will be taken late unless the student has prior approval from the professor.
- No extra-credit work will be accepted or assigned in this class under any circumstances. The existing assignment schedule allows all students ample opportunity to succeed in passing the course.
- Grading
  - The two exams will account for 40% (20% each) of the final grade.
  - The weekly political issue summaries will account for 30% of the final grade.
  - The reviews will account for 30% (10% each) of the final grade.
  - Late work will be penalized five points per weekday. Late work will not be accepted later than one week after the due date.

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- The grading scale for this course is as follows:
  - A = 98-100; A- = 95-97; B+ = 92-94; B = 89-91; B- = 86-88; C+ = 83-85; C = 80-82; C- = 77-79; D+ = 74-76; D = 71-73; D- = 68-70; F = 67 or below.
- Boyce College awards grade points on a 4-point system. The quality point value per credit hour for each letter grade is as follows:
  - A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0; C- = 1.7; D+ = 1.3; D = 1.0; D- = 0.7; F = 0.
- Attendance
  - Students are expected to attend class every day. Attendance will be checked at each class session. A student who misses more than twenty-five percent of class meetings will forfeit credit for the class and receive a failing grade.
  - Students are also expected to be in class on time. If a student is late to class three times it will count the same as an absence. If a student has a legitimate reason for missing a class for an extended period of time (illness or accident), it is the student's responsibility to notify the professor so missed tests and assignments may be made up.
- Classroom Policies
  - Students are expected to pay attention to the discussion and not to chat in class with other students. They are also expected to be awake. Students who talk excessively or who fall asleep will be counted absent and may be asked to leave the classroom.
  - Male students are not allowed to wear facial jewelry, hats, or caps while in the classroom.
  - Students should attend class wearing proper and appropriate clothing. Remember, the classroom is not your bedroom.
  - No food or drinks in the classroom, except water.
  - Students must turn all cell phones and pagers off or to silent notification at the beginning of the class session.
  - In order to assure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., tape recorders, special adaptive equipment, special note-taking or test-taking needs) is strongly encouraged to contact the professor at the beginning of the course.
  - For instructional purposes the professor may employ the use of film, readings, and outside guests, however, this use does not constitute an endorsement by Boyce College or The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of these sources.

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- Personal Note
  - The purpose of this syllabus is to give the student the best possible chance for a good grade by specifying requirements and due dates. There will be no surprises. Schedule your reading, study, and writing so as to meet the deadlines. Late work will be penalized.
  - I and my Garrett Fellow want you to succeed: in your Christian walk, your home, your academic career, your ministry, and in this course. I will be fair and will help you whenever I can. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever you need help or clarification.
  - Contact Information:
    - E-mail: tkerns@sbts.edu
    - Office: Carver 203
    - Office phone: (502) 897-4460
    - Garrett Fellow
      - Brad Weldy
      - welds1115@hotmail.com
  
- Course Schedule
  - August 14
    - No class. Previously scheduled faculty workshop.
  - August 21
    - Syllabus, introduction to the course.
    - Local and state government.
  - August 28
    - Guest speaker: Louisville Metro Councilman Doug Hawkins
  - September 4
    - Guest speaker: Kentucky State Senator Dan Seum
  - September 11
    - United States government
  - September 18
    - United States government
  - September 25
    - Political philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes
  - October 2
    - Mid-term exam
  - October 9
    - Fall break – no classes
  - October 16
    - Political philosophy: Communism, Marxism
  - October 23
    - Political philosophy: Democracy

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- October 30
  - Political issues: abortion and euthanasia
  - Reading assignment: *Embryo*
- November 6
  - Political issues: homosexuality
- November 13
  - Political issues: Christian involvement in government
  - Reading assignment: *The Great Awakening*
- November 20
  - Final Exam