

POLS 2930: The Politics of Jesus

Saint Louis University

Fall 2023

Instructor: Professor Christopher M. Duncan, Ph.D.
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Phone: 314-977-9862
Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-12:45 in McGannon Hall 211

Course Objectives:

The theologian Karl Barth asserted, “there is no private Christianity.” The Christian God entered the world through Jesus Christ, and thus is engaged in human history. In turn, the Church, and all those who consider themselves part of the mystical body of Christ, are part of a communal association that too is situated historically. By its very nature, then, it is an association that must engage the world in the form of historical and social action— in political action broadly understood. Yet no particular group, political party, nation, or movement is fully representative of, nor is to be fully equated with, God. Honest disagreement and constructive engagement on central political ideas and issues is sown into the nature of human communities. The answers, however, are not boundless. Christians must be guided in their public actions and deliberations by their quest to achieve the common good. Defining what that means and deliberating about how best to achieve it leaves open a wide variety of both individual and collective choices and decisions.

In part, this course is intended to help the student understand the historical, theoretical, theological, and political contexts that have helped shape and guide those individual and collective decisions and choices in the American public square. It is also intended to push the student to think through the nature of social and political institutions, public policy, and political action from a Christian perspective. The course takes as its starting point the insight of Glen Tinder when he argues that Christians have always “infuriated politically serious people” because they are “unreliable allies of either the left or right.”

Texts*

1. *The Bible* (any mainstream version will suffice). The instructor relies on *The Jerusalem Bible* (Reader’s Edition) published by Doubleday.
2. Benjamin T. Lynerd, *Republican Theology: The Civil Religion of American Evangelicals*.
3. Caryn D. Riswold, *Feminism and Christianity: Questions and Answers in the Third Wave*.
4. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.
5. Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*
6. John Courtney Murray, S.J. *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*.
7. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Yoder)

*Additional Readings will be handed out or are available through the internet by following the links provided.

Civility

A course like this can give rise to strong opinions and even vigorous arguments. That is perfectly acceptable. However, each person and their opinions will be treated with respect and dignity. The use of cell phones, computers or other electronic devices during class is prohibited except as approved for note-taking. Receiving calls, texting or other behavior that detracts from course material will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in such behavior will be asked to leave the class and the day will be

counted as an absence for the first offense. For the second offense, the person engaging in the behavior will be asked to leave and not return to class for the rest of the semester.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. If for some reason the nature of the student's illness or other events outside of their control prevents the student from participating or attending as required they should contact the instructor immediately. Students who complete the semester with **2** or fewer unexcused absences will receive a **5-point** bonus added to their final total.

Class sessions will **not** be recorded and so any students missing class should consult with other students to share notes from lecture and with the instructor during office hours in order to seek clarification or have their questions answered.

Important Dates

October 26 th	No Class	Fall Break
November 23 rd	No Class	Thanksgiving Break

Course Requirements & Grades*

(7) Essays	70 points
(1) Take-Home Final Exam	25 points
Participation	<u>5 points</u>
Total	100 points

*Students will be expected to attend each class session with the required readings done and be prepared and willing to participate thoughtfully in the discussions of them.

Grade Scale in Points

100-93=	A
92-90=	A-
89-87=	B+
86-83=	B
82-80=	B-
79-77=	C+
76-73=	C
72-70=	C-
69-60=	D
Below 60=	

Course Outline

Dates	Sessions	Topic
August 24- August 31	(3)	Introduction to the Course & The Bible as Political Theory

Readings:

Session 1: The Politics of the Covenant

- *Genesis*: 1-3; *Exodus*: 3, 19-21, 34; *Deuteronomy*: 5-7, 13, 19-25, 28; *Job*: 40-41; *Psalms*: 2, 20, 23, 37, 72, 82; *Jeremiah*: 22 (10-23), 23 (1-5), 50-51; *Lamentations*: 2 (37-47), 4 (23-55); *Leviticus*: 1-4, 20.

Session 2: God v. The State

- Amos 4-5; Micah: 2-4; Nahum: 1-3; Hosea 4-7; Judges: 1-8; Samuel I: 8-13, 15-17; Samuel II; Kings I: 1-5, 11-12; Daniel: 7-12; Isaiah: 2-3, 5, 28, 32, 52-53, 56, 50-60; Jeremiah: 5, 22, 31 (29-40), 23, 34 (1-22), 50-51; Matthew (all); Luke: 6 (12-49), 12, 16 (9-31), 17 (1-19), 20 (1-8), 22 (24-38).

Session 3: The Law of Love

- John: 13-14; Peter: 2-3 (1-17); Romans: 3, 7, 13, 12 (9-21); Corinthians I: 12 (12-31), 13, 15; James (all); Revelations: 4-19, 20-21; Galatians: 3; Acts: 2, 4, 5, 8, (55-60), 9-11, 15, 17, 22-23.

Essay #1 Due September 7th

September 5- September 19 (5) Evangelicals and American Civil Religion

Readings:

Session 1: *Republican Theology* [chapters 1-2]
Session 2: *Republican Theology* [chapters 3-4]
Session 3: *Republican Theology* [chapters 4-5]
Session 4: *Republican Theology* [chapter 6]
Session 5: *Republican Theology* [chapter 7]

Essay #2 Due September 26th

September 21- October 10 (6) Catholicism and the American Liberal State

Readings:

Session 1: *We Hold These Truths* [chapters 1-3]
Session 2: *We Hold These Truths* [chapters 4-5]
Session 3: *We Hold These Truths* [chapters 6-7]
Session 4: *We Hold These Truths* [chapters 8-9]
Session 5: *We Hold These Truths* [chapters 12-13]
Session 6: "Gaudium et Spes" <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/v4.html>

Essay #3 Due October 17th

October 12- October 24 (4) Christian Nationalism in America

Readings:

Session 1: *Kingdom Coming* [chapters 1-2]
Session 2: *Kingdom Coming* [chapters 3-4]
Session 3: *Kingdom Coming* [chapters 5-6]
Session 7: *Kingdom Coming* [Conclusion, Afterward, and Epilogue]

Essay #4 Due November 2nd

October 31- November 7 (3) Black Liberation Theology

Readings:

Session 1: *A Black Theology of Liberation* [chapters 1-2]
Session 2: *A Black Theology of Liberation* [chapters 3-4]
Session 3: *A Black Theology of Liberation* [chapters 5-6]
Session 4: *A Black Theology of Liberation* [chapter 7]

Essay #5 Due November 14th

November 9- November 16 (3) Third Wave Feminism and Christianity

Readings:

Session 1: *Feminism and Christianity* [Introduction & Part One]
Session 2: *Feminism and Christianity* [Introduction & Part Two]
Session 1: *Feminism and Christianity* [Introduction & Part Three]

Essay #6 Due November 30th

November 21- December 7 (5) Post-Liberal Christian Politics and Jesus

Readings:

Session 1: *The Politics of Jesus* [chapters 1-3]
Session 2: *The Politics of Jesus* [chapters 4-6]
Session 3: *The Politics of Jesus* [chapters 7-8]
Session 4: *The Politics of Jesus* [chapters 9-10]
Session 5: *The Politics of Jesus* [chapters 11-12]

Essay #7 Due December 11th

Final Exam Handed Out December 7th

Final Exam Due via email December 15th by 11:59 p.m.

Additional Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at accessibility_disability@slu.edu or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact to CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to disability accommodations. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean's office.

Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.

Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to Title IX. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean's office.

Student Success Center

The Student Success Center (SSC) supports students in reaching their goals in and out of the classroom. Providing a variety of resources, the Student Success Center houses both the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) and Academic Support, which includes Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, University Writing Services, and Student Success Coaching. The Student Success Center is located in the Busch Student Center, Suite 331, and students can make an appointment with any SSC resource via EAB Navigate. To learn more about the Student Success Center and its resources, please visit: <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/index.php>.

University Writing Services

University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations with trained writing consultants who help with everything from brainstorming, outlining, and proposing research questions to documenting sources, revising, and implementing feedback. These consultations can take place in-person, asynchronously, or via Zoom and can be scheduled through EAB Navigate – Student. Getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels on different writing projects (including but not limited to class assignments, conference papers, cover letters, dissertations, group projects, multimedia assignments, personal statements, senior capstone projects, short answer questions on applications, speeches, and theses). For additional information, visit <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/university-writing-services/index.php> or send an email to writing@slu.edu.

University Counseling Center Syllabus Statement

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers free, short-term, solution-focused counseling to Saint Louis University undergraduate and graduate students. UCC counselors are highly trained clinicians who can assist with a variety of issues, such as adjustment to college life, troubling changes in mood, and chronic psychological conditions. To make an appointment, call 314-977-8255 (TALK), or visit the clinic on the second floor of Wuller Hall. For after hours needs, please press #9 after dialing the clinic numb

