



THEO 7190: Political Theology
North Park Theological Seminary
Fall 2024, Wednesday 1:30-4:30pm
3 credit hours

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Political Theology is a course in the transformative justice sequence that explores the relationship between theology, politics, and the Christian faith. Students will engage thinkers such as Metz, Moltmann, Soelle, Gutierrez, and Cone. The course addresses what constitutes a “political theology” through themes such as the relationship between church and state, the role of religion and the common good, and theo-political models for Christian engagement in political discourse and ecclesial praxis. It will examine these themes by tracing the theological developments from the second half of the twentieth century to the second-generation approaches, including Latin American Liberation, Black, Feminist, Womanist, Indigenous, Evangelical, and Fundamentalist (Christian nationalists).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through the course students will be able to:

1. Critically consider and evaluate biblical, theological, social, and historical bases of representative contemporary political theologies;
2. Analyze and articulate various ways in which power functions in religion and politics in daily life;
3. Construct proposals for developing a pastoral community of theo-political shalom for social transformation.
4. Practice grounded listening and self-reflective enquiry into one’s own political self and impact on ministerial identity.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Phillips, Elizabeth. *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: T&T Clark, 2012.
2. Cavanaugh, William T., Jeffrey W. Bailey, and Craig Hovey, eds. *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012.
3. Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.
4. Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

1. Cavanaugh, William T, and Peter Manley Scott, eds. *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 1st edition. UK: Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2019 (selections).

2. Peterson, Anna Lisa. *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War*. Albany" SUNY Press, 1998 (selection)
3. Passos, Eduardo Schmidt, "The Blood of the Martyrs: Erik Peterson's Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty" *The Review of Politics*, 80.3 (2018), 487-510.
4. Bretherton, Luke. *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2019 (selection to be provided).
5. Herzog, Frederick. *Theology from the Belly of the Whale: A Frederick Herzog Reader*. Edited by Joerg Rieger. Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1999 (selections).
6. Harris, Fredrick C. "Something Within: Religion as a Mobilizer of African-American Political Activism." *The Journal of Politics* 56, no. 1 (February 1994): 42–68.
7. Pimblott, Kerry. *Black Theologies*. Edited by Paul Harvey and Kathryn Gin Lum. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2018.
8. Farrag, Hebah. "The Fight for Black Lives Is a Spiritual Movement: Religion and Racial Justice The George Floyd Protests." *Berkley Forum*, June 9, 2020.

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

Participation (20%) Course engagement is dependent on class discussion, triad work and conversation, attentive listening to others, offering insight based on experience and course material, and demonstrating critical reading of texts. This includes creating space for others to offer insight and invitational posture to one another. For those who speak much to hold times of silence; for those who speak little to input your voice. Presence and participation are crucial to course outcomes. Come to class having done the reading and prepared to discuss material. Plan to take notes with paper/pencil or pen and demonstrate intellectual curiosity! Looking forward to your insight into developing your ministry.

Short Weekly Reading Response Presentation & Reading Log (20%) Throughout the semester, we will attend to the ways in which we are moved by the themes we are reading, discussing, and pondering. Every week, we will spend time in class by each reading out loud the one sentence or question from the assigned reading that you experienced to be particularly moving, challenging, or thought provoking. Bring this with you to class every week. Emphasis on brevity.

Critical Reflection 1 (Cultural Artifact Analysis) (20%) In two-three written pages (1,500 words maximum), Analyze a cultural artifact and its relationship to political theology. What are its theo-political representations and the story-telling implications in the cultural artifact? Choose a social movement, movie, music, song, painting, fashion trend or piece, memorial or public ritual. Examples of these artifacts can be found in the works of cultural figures like Tupac, Dolly Parton, Janelle Monáe, the song "Strange Fruit," BLM or #MeToo social media images, Picasso's *Guernica*, the Marvel or Star Wars movies, novels like Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Works presented in previous courses and in the current can be selected. Selections will be discussed with instructor prior to due date.

Artistic Response (20%) Create an artistic response to reflect your theo-political imagination that addresses any theme. Suggested themes include shalom, common good, democracy, inside/outside, violence, peace, power, justice, God's kin-dom/reign, economic equity, etc. Any artistic expression with what is available to you is welcome from spoken word, poetry, drawing, song, script, short story.

Collaboration with others permitted with instructor's approval. The artistic response along with theological rationale will be briefly presented in class. Dates TBD

Critical Reflection 2 (Integrative Political Theology and Practice) (20%) In two-three written pages (1,500 words) (1) Develop your own statement and rationale for a political theology. How do you utilize and synthesize biblical and religious tradition, lived experience, and context into an emergent political theology? (2) Analyze some of the thinkers and theologians (minimum 3) we have discussed in class and synthesize their work with its limits and possibilities. (3) Briefly apply your political theology to a specific issue and your own ministerial practice. How does a political theological rationale impact contextual faith practice and restorative leadership?

Grading Scale is based on the North Park standard below:

A: Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94) This grade applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87) This grade applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of requirements.

C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C – = 78-79) This grade applies to average work that still fulfills the course requirements.

D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D – = 70-71) This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. Course work receiving this grade will not be counted toward a degree.

F: Failure (69 and below) To receive credit in the subject, the course must be repeated.

I: Incomplete This course is counted as an F in the calculation of GPA until the student's work is completed and submitted. A grade of incomplete or I is granted only when a student can demonstrate sufficient cause for not completing the course work on time. Such cause includes illness, disability, emergency and/or unforeseeable circumstances. Incompletes are not intended as ordinary extensions of time to complete a course, but granted only under extraordinary circumstances. The professor is not obligated to grant the request for an incomplete.

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

This course is highly dependent on course discussion, group work, and participation. Attendance is expected and desired for a robust learning environment. If absent, the student is responsible in reaching out to fellow class members for notes and information. Late submissions will be accepted up to one week after the due date with a full-grade deduction. Extenuating circumstances such as illness, restrictions, or conflicting responsibilities will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis. Turning work in to the SRA TA on-time helps in maintaining participation, communication with course instructor, and timely grading and return of comments. As a practice of justice, we will use inclusive language as much as possible in written work and class discussion.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.

2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog, pp. 25–27.

ACCOMMODATIONS

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class related to a disability, contact the SRA program director.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see page 15 of the Seminary Academic Catalog.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Readings	Topic	Activity Assignment
8/28	Phillips, pp. 1-54 Eerdmans Reader (ER), pp. i-xxiv;	What is Political Theology? Part I Course Expectations	<i>In class:</i> Introductions, review syllabus, discuss concepts and approach to course topics. <i>To submit:</i> Present Reading Response
9/4	Phillips, pp. 55-71 Bretherton <i>Christ and the Common Life</i> , pp. 16-48. Farrag, “The Fight for Black Lives is a Spiritual Movement”	What is Political Theology? Part II	<i>In class:</i> Triad discussion of politics and religion, spirituality and democratic action. Political-spiritual autobiography and mapping exercise. How is the personal political? <i>To Submit:</i> Present Reading Response
9/11	ER Ch 2 Bauckham “Reading Bible Politically” & 4 Míguez “Latina Am. Readings” Wiley Blackwell Companion (WBC) Ch. 1 Brueggemann & 2 Rowland	Sources: Scripture The “how to’s” of political theology: Choosing our methods, approaches, and sources.	<i>In class:</i> In triads, select biblical texts and religious tradition to explore political theology. What are the difficulties and challenges to political and supposed apolitical approaches? How are we reading the bible



			<p>for theological-political theses? Christian tradition?</p> <p><i>To Submit:</i> Present Reading Response</p>
9/18	<p>WBC 4 Elshtain “Augustine” & 5 Bauerschmidt “Aquinas”</p> <p>ER 8 Schmemmann “Worship in a Secular Age” & 10 Pickstock “Liturgy & Modernity”</p>	<p>Sources: Tradition & Liturgy</p> <p>Interpreting the political as ancient Christian tradition</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Triad review of ancient and liturgical sources. What are A & A’s theological understanding in how God is understood? How is the political understood? How does the view of God and Justice/<i>polis</i> “line-up” with the courses in the SRA? What is the role of the church in politics? How does worship shape political life? How does political life shape worship?</p> <p><i>To Submit:</i> Present Reading Response</p>
9/25	<p>Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> 1-30</p> <p>Harris, “Something Within: Religion as a Mobilizer of African-American Political Activism.”</p> <p>Peterson, “Sacrifice, History, and Ritual” 72-92 <i>Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion</i></p>	<p>Sources: Culture & Community</p> <p>Black Church engagement, El Salvador’s martyr’s and popular ritual and response for transformation. Violence and power.</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Triad and class discussion on the theological and sociological foundations of political action and inaction? How does personal and communal memory shape political action? How does communal narrative and practices shape political engagement?</p> <p><i>To Submit:</i> Present Reading Response</p>
10/2	<p>ER 14 Niebuhr “Augustine’s Political Realism”, 19 Schmitt “Political Theology,” 20 Bonhoeffer “State & Church,” 21 Barth “Church & State”</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> WBC 8 Hollerich “Schmitt,” 16 Adams “Moltmann”</p>	<p>Survey: German Sources of Political Theologies (aka <i>Under Hitler’s Shadow</i>: Schmitt, Bonhoeffer, Peterson, Barth, Niebuhr).</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Triad work on historical development of modern democratic/totalitarian political theologies. Are they still at work?</p> <p><i>To submit:</i> (1) Cultural Artifact selection (2) Present Reading Response</p>



10/9	<p>Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i>, 30-64</p> <p>Passos, “The Blood of the Martyrs” E. Peterson v. C. Schmitt.</p> <p>Peterson, “The Fruits of Martyrdom” 137-156; “Conclusions: Religion and Political Protests” 157-182 <i>Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion</i></p>	<p>Witness and Martyrdom in Political Theologies</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Triad discussion of cultural artifact analysis. Discussion of Peterson’s idea of martyrdom versus Schmitt’s sovereignty? Where do sovereignty and sacrifice breakdown as theo-political ideals? What are the benefits? Discuss <i>iglesia popular</i> in El Salvador’s civil war and Cone’s reflection on spiritual’s in nonviolent political action.</p> <p><i>To submit:</i> Present Reading Response</p>
10/16		Reading Week	
10/23	<p>Herzog, “Political Gospel,” “Theology of Liberation,” “The Eating and the Glory” 73-93</p> <p>Douglas, <i>Stand your Ground</i>, 3-89.</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Pimblott <i>Black Theologies</i></p>	<p>Race, Gender, Poverty, and War. Part I</p> <p>1960-1980 socio-cultural revolution and political theologies</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Audiovisual exercise on political theologies. “Strange Fruit,” Vietnam, and Practicing Protest and Dignity.</p> <p><i>To submit:</i> (1) Critical Reflection 1 (2) Present Reading Response</p>
10/30	<p>Douglas, <i>Stand Your Ground</i>, 90-132</p> <p>ER 23 Sölle “Fartherhood, Power, Barabarium” pp. 327-334</p> <p>Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i>, 120-166</p>	<p>Race, Gender, Poverty, and War. Part II</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> Triad discussion of the relationship between war, race, and sexism. Power in public.</p> <p><i>To submit:</i> Present Reading Response</p>
11/6	<p>WBC 14 Pui-Lon “Feminist Theology, Southern,” 15</p> <p>Graham “Feminist Theology, Northern”</p> <p>ER 29 D. Williams “The Color of Feminism: Or speaking the Black Woman’s Tongue” pp. 398-417.</p> <p>ER 30 Isasi-Díaz “<i>Mujerista Theology</i>” pp. 418-436.</p>	<p>Feminist, Womanist, Mujerista Political Theologies</p>	<p><i>In class:</i> In triads discuss how gender and images of God interact with political theologies. How does lived experience and cultural gendered power relationships shape religious experience and conceptions of power?</p> <p><i>To Submit:</i> (1) Artistic Response (2) Present Reading Response</p>



11/13	ER 12 Gutiérrez “Option for the Poor” pp. 174-193 ER 13 Sobrino “The Central Position of the Reign of God” WBC 21 Aguilar “Liberation Theology 2: Developments and Reception”	Latin American Political Theologies: <i>liberación y el Dios de vida</i>	<i>In class:</i> Triad work—identify theological and cultural markers of the reign of God? What is the Church’s role in justice and society? What does the conception of “reign of God” mean for your ministry?
11/20	WBC 18 Pieris “Political Theologies in Asia,” pp. 256-70. 25 Katangole “Political Theologies of Africa” ER 36 Nirmal “Towards a Christian Dalit Theology,” pp. 537-52.	Political Theologies in Asia and Africa Creating Emergent Political Theologies	<i>In class:</i> Triad discussion on creating political theologies and global difference and connections. <i>To Submit:</i> (1) Critical Reflection 2 (2) Present Reading Response
11/27		Thanksgiving Break	
12/4		Flex Day	
12/11		Final Class Day	