

Politics and Theology
TH 3XP3
CC/CW/PS

McMaster Divinity College

Fall 2022

Online

Synchronous sessions Wednesdays, 4:00pm–5:50pm

Steven M. Studebaker, Ph.D.

Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 20097

Email: studeba@mcmaster.ca

Office hours: by appointment

I. Description:

This course investigates the various forms of political theology and theological approaches that implicate Christians and the church in politics. Part of this course will chart the history of Christian political theology—e.g., Luther’s theology of the two kingdoms and liberation theology. It will devote significant time to contemporary approaches and issues—e.g., eco-theology—and ways of understanding the political identity of Christians and the church vis-à-vis their place and role in society—e.g., should Christians be exiles on the margin of empire or engaged in the public space?

Specializations:

Christian Worldview

Church and Culture

Pastoral Studies

II. Course Objectives:

A. Knowing:

1. Know a variety of biblical, historical, and contemporary ways Christians have understood the relationship between Christianity and the state.
2. Know the distinct historical-cultural contexts of Christian political theology and the variety of Christian responses to those cultural conditions.
3. Consider contemporary political issues from a Christian perspective.

B. Being:

1. Appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Embrace a deeper sense of your Christian identity vis-à-vis contemporary political theologies.

3. Become more aware of the biblical, theological, and cultural influences on your Christian political views.

C. Doing:

1. Analyze contemporary political issues from a Christian perspective.
2. Be able to develop responses to political concerns/issues that draw on biblical, historical, and theological resources in political theology.
3. Develop skills addressing contemporary political issues from a Christian perspective.

III. Required Texts:

1. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
2. William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
3. Additional readings may be assigned (e.g., articles, chapter selections within books).

IV. Course Assignments Outline:

Assignment	Percent	Due
A. Current Issue Discussion:	15%	Day of presentation
B. Profile in Political Theology:	20%	Nov 4
C. Political Theology Paper/Projects:	60%	
1) Presentation	20%	Nov 23, Nov 30
2) Padlet Feedback	5%	Nov 25, Dec 2
3) Paper	35%	Nov 30, Dec 7
D. Reading:	5%	Dec 9
E. Participation:	X	
	<hr style="width: 100%; border: 0.5px solid black;"/> Total: 100%	

V. Course Outline:

- All live Zoom sessions will be on Wednesdays starting at 4:00pm.

• DPT only Zoom sessions start at 5:00pm—e.g., see week 3, Sept 28.

• Online video content will be posted by Monday of the class week.

Week	Weekly Session		Due Dates & Reminders
1 Sept 14	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm • Personal Introductions and Course Overview	Online • Welcome • Syllabus overview • Assignment overview	• <i>Cambridge Companion</i> , ch. 3
2 Sept 21		Online I. A Political Bible!? A. The Politics of Creation & Redemption	• <i>Cambridge Companion</i> , chs. 13–14
3 Sept 28	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm • Current issue presentations • Q & A on lectures • DPT only Zoom discussion of seminar/blog series	Online B. The Politics of the Divine Image C. The Politics of the New Jerusalem	
4 Oct 5	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm • Current issue presentations • Q & A on lectures	Online II. Historical Paradigms of Political Theology A. Eusebius & Christian Empire	

<p>5 Oct 12</p>	<p>Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current issue presentations • Q & A on lectures • DPT only paper discussion 	<p>Online</p> <p>B. Two Cities and Kingdoms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Augustine 2. Luther 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, chs. 8–9
<p>6 Oct 19</p>	<p>Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current issue presentations • Q & A on lectures 	<p>Online</p> <p>C. Christian Realism: Reinhold Niebuhr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, ch. 2, 4, and 5
<p>7 Oct 26</p>	<p>Reading Week and Hybrid Intensive Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No synchronous session or video lectures this week</i> 		
<p>8 Nov 2</p>	<p>Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile in political theology discussion • Discussion of Cavanaugh’s <i>Migration of the Holy</i> 	<p>Online</p> <p>III. Contemporary Paradigms of Political Theology</p> <p>A. Anabaptism, Yoder, and Hauerwas</p> <p>B. Christian Progressives and Conservatives</p> <p>C. Radical Orthodoxy and Cavanaugh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile in Political Theology due Nov 4 • Cavanaugh, <i>Migrations of the Holy</i> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, ch. 6
<p>9 Nov 9</p>	<p>Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political theology paper/project workshop 	<p>Online</p> <p>IV. Issues in Political Theology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, chs. 7, 10–11

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPT seminar/blog series presentation (all students participate) 	A. The Politics of Neoliberal Capitalism & Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPT seminar/blog series due Nov 11 												
10 Nov 16		Online B. The Politics of Tolerance, Cancel Culture, and Violence													
11 Nov 23	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm Paper Presentations <i>Week One</i> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Paper</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Paper	1		2		3		4		5		Online <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Padlet feedback Nov 25 	
	Paper														
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12 Nov 30	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm Paper Presentations <i>Week Two</i> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Paper</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>6</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Paper	6		7		8		9		10		Online <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Padlet feedback Dec 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week one papers due Nov 30
	Paper														
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
13 Dec 7	Conclusion and Assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week two papers due Dec 7 • Submit reading report on Avenue Dec 9 												

VI. Assignment Descriptions:

General Guidelines:

- Submit your final assignments in the relevant folder on Avenue to Learn.
- Use the following format for file names: your last name.assignment name.docx [Studebaker.AssignmentName.docx]. PDF files may not receive electronic comments—I find them clunky and difficult to deal with.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.
- All assignments marked according to the Grading Criteria Form (available on A2L)
- All papers and assignments should conform to the MDC's Style Guide

A. Current Issue Discussion:

1. Purpose:

This assignment provides the opportunity to engage a contemporary political issue from a Christian perspective. These brief case studies will take place during live Zoom sessions. We will have two to three presentations during each session. Each presentation is approximately 15 minutes. We will schedule the date and times during the first week of class and endeavor to find a date and time that works for everyone. The sessions will be recorded in the case you are not able to join the live session.

2. Description:

- a. Select a contemporary issue, figure, movement, controversy, etc. and analyze it from the perspective of a Christian political theology.

- The church and COVID-19
- The church and climate change
- Christians and racism
- Christians and equality (e.g., gender issues, wealth disparities)
- Eugenics, transhumanism
- Socialism vs. capitalism

- b. Guidelines:

- 1) Length: 10-15 minutes depending on number of students in the class.
- 2) Describe the selected topic: you can use PowerPoint/Keynote using the screen share function in Zoom.

- 3) Analyze the issue from the perspective of a Christian political theology.
- 4) Identify implications for Christian political theology.
- 5) Submit in the A2L assignment folder a description of the topic and your analysis of it, as well as the resources used to develop the discussion topic. Length: four to five pages. 6 sources.

B. Profile in Political Theology:

1. Purpose:

This assignment provides the opportunity to explore the political theology of a figure, event, text, or movement in the history (past or present) of Christian theology. Christianity has a rich history of engagement with the political order. This assignment provides the opportunity to investigate one.

2. Description:

- a. Select a historical or contemporary figure, movement, text, or event that shows how Christians have engaged the political order.
- b. Length of the essay is 7–8 pages. 6 to 8 sources.
- c. Possible figures
 - Constantine and the beginning of Christendom
 - Charlemagne and conversion by the sword
 - William Wilberforce and the abolition movement
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer and political resistance
 - Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement
 - Tommy Douglas and national health care
 - Social Gospel and the temperance movement

C. Political Theology Project/Paper:

General guidelines:

This assignment constitutes the “major paper” and presentation of the course. The **purpose** of the paper/project is **vocational development**. It should **advance** your **vocational trajectory**.

Selecting whether to prepare a **project or a paper** is an important step in the process. If you anticipate further graduate work or writing a thesis as part of your MTS or MDiv, then an academic research-thesis paper is an excellent option.

- A research-thesis paper provides skill development in conducting the concentrated study on a particular research topic necessary for advanced academic work.
- If your vocational track is ministry or an alternative professional field, then a project may be an effective option. Completing a project provides skill development in **contextualizing and applying** the fruit of theological research and reflection.

If you **have an idea** for a paper or creative project that does not fit neatly into the parameters of your specialization’s assignment description, please discuss your idea with me. I am open to papers/projects that cohere with the essence of the course and are suited to your research field and interests.

Specialization focus: CC/CW/PS

- ◆ Please consult the assignment description for your degree specialization ◆

Church and Culture

This specialization focuses on the **intersection of the church and its cultural setting**. Developing the ability to **interpret political issues and to specify an appropriate Christian response and interaction with it** is the purpose of this assignment. Discerning appropriate ways to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ in terms of our specific cultural location is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship and ministry and this assignment seeks to facilitate this process. The paper/project analyzes a contemporary political issue or movement from a Christian perspective. Careful and accurate description of the political issue, as well as thoughtful assessment and response from a Christian perspective is essential. An **alternative approach is to consider the influence of cultural context on a particular type of Christian political theology**—e.g., what were the social problems and political movements that shaped Rauschenbusch’s Social Gospel or Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision for civil rights?

Possible topics:

- How can churches mobilize to help immigrants?
- How can religious institutions navigate the tension of certain civil rights issues and maintain fidelity to biblical morality? E.g., reproductive rights.
- What is the political role of the church in an increasingly post-Christian, multicultural, and religiously plural society?
- Is religion intrinsically disruptive to and contrary to the political, civil, and social values of western state liberalism?

Christian Worldview

This specialization relates to the **intellectual environment**—historical, contemporary, and global—of contemporary Christianity. Engage a topic related to political theology that addresses an element of Christian worldview. The

paper/project should be constructive and not only descriptive. The **heart of this assignment is your creative contribution to what a Christian worldview offers to an issue in contemporary political theology.**

Possible topics:

- What does a theology of the divine image contribute to the discussion of neo-liberal capitalism (e.g., are Hauerwas and others correct that liberalism is intrinsically antithetical to Christianity?) or euthanasia?
- What are the key biblical and theological principles for a Christian political theology and what do they suggest about the Christian's/the church's relation to the state and politics?
- How does Augustine's idea of the 'City of God' and the 'City of Man' or Luther's theology of the two kingdoms apply to Christians in post-Christian and multicultural Canada?
- Does Anabaptism offer a promising way for churches to navigate their social location in post-Christendom society?

Pastoral Studies

This specialization focuses on vocational ministry. Prepare a sermon/message/curriculum appropriate **for a given ministry audience related to political theology.** You can draw on biblical, historical, and/or systematic approaches to political theology. The content of the sermon **draws from theological resources, but expresses the yield of that theology in language and terms that are appropriate for a ministry audience.**

Alternatively, if you have an idea for contextualizing political theology for ministry other than in a sermon, please talk with me so we can design a project that enables you to maximize your work in the class for your ministry context and meets the goals of the specialization in Pastoral Studies.

Possible topics:

- What does Canada's Supreme Court ruling on euthanasia mean for chaplains and pastors providing end-of-life counsel and care?
- How does an urban church advocate for community residents in the face of the destabilizing forces of gentrification?
- How would a sermon series advocate celebration of abundant life without co-opting the cultural myth of consumerism?

1. Paper/project **Presentation**

a. Purpose:

- Presenting your paper gives you the opportunity to share your major paper/project with your class colleagues.

- Your presentation may not reflect the completed paper/project. Indeed, the gap between the presentation and final due date provides you the opportunity to incorporate feedback from your class colleagues (see below for Paper/Project Collaboration).

b. Guidelines:

- a. During a synchronous (Zoom) session, share the following on your paper or project:

- Topic
- Why you chose your topic
- Content areas and development
- Key resources

- b. Time: 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Paper/project Padlet Feedback

a. Purpose:

Provides experience in responding to and contributing to your class colleagues' projects. It also provides the opportunity to develop professional skills in online presentations.

b. Description:

Each student prepares a critical evaluation of the integrative papers presented by their class colleagues. Evaluations can be written, audio, or audio-visual.

1) The critique:

- a) Remember to be charitable.

- b) Critical (includes highlighting and discussing problems *and* strengths):

The critique should explore the following sorts of issues:

- Does the paper have a thesis?
- Does the content develop and support the thesis?
- Does it use appropriate sources?
- Does it address a significant topic and develop it?
- For projects, does it seem like an effective approach to a particular issue, topic, and does it seem effective given its target audience?

- 2) Post your critical evaluation for each student in the Paper/Project Padlet.

3. Paper/project written submissions

a. Paper:

1) Content and argument:

- Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
Example of a thesis statement: Stanley Hauerwas' ecclesiocentric vision of Christian identity does/does not provide an effective paradigm for Christian activity in a modern nation state.
- Describe your topic under consideration.
- Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
- Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms of the position and interact with them vis-à-vis your view (where appropriate and in so far as space allows).

2) Presentation and style of paper:

- Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., avoid colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active). Research-thesis papers must have a thesis statement (stated in the introduction), introduction, content, and conclusion sections of the paper.
- Use and document a *minimum* of ten scholarly resources.
- Accurately document sources according to the College's Style Guide.
- Paper length: 10–12 pages.
- Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
- The final written paper/project is due one week after the video presentation (see course outline for final submission dates).

b. Projects/Sermons:

- 1) Annotated bibliography of research sources: An annotation is a paragraph or two that describes the content of the book, essay, or article and how it relates to your research project.
- 2) Sermon: Submit a manuscript (does not need to be a verbatim manuscript; a detailed and annotated outline works) of your sermon/message that includes footnotes, which detail where and how you applied and adapted your theological research in the area of political theology.
- 3) Double-spaced pages, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- 4) Use and document at least 10 scholarly resources (e.g., scholarly monographs, journal articles, and essays).
- 5) Document sources with footnotes and follow the MacDiv Style Guide.

D. Reading:

- The professor may at times assign supplementary readings.
- Submit a reading report on Avenue to Learn that states the percentage of reading completed for each assigned reading.

Example of reading report:

Steve Studebaker

Hovey and Philips	90%
Cavanaugh	100%

VII. Policies:

A. Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, The Hurlburt Family Bookstore, McMaster Divinity College (Across from Cullen Hall). Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934, Text: 416 668 3434. fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Free Shipping is available to students. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's

academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

- C. **Gender Inclusive Language:**
McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).
- D. **Style:**
All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.
- E. **Disclaimer:**
This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

VIII. Late-Assignment and Exam Policy:

- A. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.
- B. Students take exams on the date and at the time scheduled in the syllabus.
- C. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late (e.g., if the grade is 90 and it is one day late, the grade will be reduced to 85).
- D. Assignments and exams will be accepted without penalty after the specified date in the syllabus **only** in the case of an excused absence. If a student misses an exam or assignment submission due to a reason that he/she believes is excusable, then he/she must notify the instructor and schedule an exam date and/or late-assignment submission date within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the missed class session.
- E. Assignments and exams will not be accepted late on the basis of the student's involvement with

school-approved activities. If you are not able to be in class for an exam or assignment submission, then you must pre-arrange with the instructor to take the exam and/or submit the assignment before the scheduled date in the syllabus.