

Politics and Theology

TH 5XP5

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:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
A. Seminar or Blog Series	50%	
a. Presentation	10%	Nov 9
b. Annotated bibliography	15%	Nov 11
c. Seminar or blog series	25%	Nov 11
B. Paper, Presentation, & Interaction	50%	
a. Presentation	10%	Nov 23, Nov 30
b. Post Padlet Feedback	10%	Nov 25, Dec 2
c. Submit final paper (A2L folder)	30%	Nov 30, Dec 7
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 III. Historical Paradigms of Political Theology A. Eusebius & Christian Empire	
5 Oct 12	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm • Current issue presentations	Online B. Two Cities and Kingdoms 1. Augustine	• <i>Cambridge Companion</i> , chs. 8–9

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q & A on lectures • DPT only paper discussion 	2. Luther	
6 Oct 19	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current issue presentations • Q & A on lectures 	Online C. Christian Realism: Reinhold Niebuhr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, ch. 2, 4, and 5
7 Oct 26	Reading Week and Hybrid Intensive Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No synchronous session or video lectures this week</i> 		
8 Nov 2	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile in political theology discussion • Discussion of Cavanaugh’s <i>Migration of the Holy</i> 	Online III. Contemporary Paradigms of Political Theology A. Anabaptism, Yoder, and Hauerwas B. Christian Progressives and Conservatives C. Radical Orthodoxy and Cavanaugh	<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
9 Nov 9	Synchronous 4:00–5:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political theology paper/project workshop • DPT seminar/blog series presentation (all students participate) 	Online IV. Issues in Political Theology A. The Politics of Neoliberal Capitalism & Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, chs. 7, 10–11 • 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" data-bbox="272 630 586 835"> <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 • Post Padlet feedback Nov 25	
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7															
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10															
13 Dec 7	Conclusion and Assessment		• 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. Annotated bibliography and Seminar OR Blog series

- ◆ This assignment has three parts
 - Annotated bibliography
 - Seminar OR blog series
 - Class presentation/online post and interaction on Padlet.
- ◆ The purpose of this assignment is to develop skills in . . .
 - Researching and reviewing academic resources
 - Creatively applying that research to your PLR topic or other areas of ministry

1. Annotated bibliography

Develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources related to *the topic of the course* and your research project. For each text, write a 100–150 word annotation that describes the content of the source and the way it relates to the seminar or blog series . The required texts for the course can be included as part of the book list.

2. Seminar OR blog series

* Note: If you have an alternative idea to a seminar or blog series, such as a sermon, please consult with me. The goal is for you to complete an assignment that is beneficial to your research and vocational context.

a. Description:

This assignment provides experience *preparing a seminar OR 4 part blog series* based on the research resources of the annotated bibliography.

The seminar/blog series should be geared to address either a church lay leadership or professional ministry leadership group. The content and its development should reflect the target audience. You can also use this assignment to investigate an area that will promote your research program. Consequently, the seminar/blog series can address the practice led topic that is the focus of your DPT studies. Thus, this assignment can provide the opportunity to investigate an area of theology and to apply it to your area of practice led research.

- Zoom discussion of seminar/blog series (week 3, Sept 28)

b. Guidelines

1) Seminar

- The seminar material should present and describe the primary content points of the topic (or sub-topic). It does not need to be a verbatim text, but a detailed and annotated outline of the seminar content (approximately 2,000 words).
- Handouts/outlines and PowerPoint/Prezi are helpful, but not required.
- Length: Develop the seminar content for a thirty- to forty-minute presentation.

2) Blog series

- Write a 4 part blog series. The blog content should derive from the research resources reviewed in the annotated bibliography.
- Length of each blog is 450–500 words.

3) The final written seminar/blog series is due Nov 11.

3. Guidelines for the Class presentation

- a. Present a summary of your seminar or blog series during the synchronous session on November 9.
- b. The presentation should summarize . . .
- Target audience,
 - Topic,
 - Why you chose it, and . . .

- Outline the topic’s development in the seminar. You do not need to present the entire seminar. The video presentation is an overview of the seminar.

c. Length of presentation is approx. 10 minutes.

B. Major paper, presentation, and interaction

- ◆ This assignment gives you experience writing and presenting article, essay, and chapter length papers. It also affords the opportunity to contribute to and receive feedback from your course colleagues.
- ◆ You are encouraged to use this assignment as an opportunity to work on papers to . . .
 - Present at academic and/or professional society meetings and/or submit to journals for publication
 - Develop material for presentation to and/or application in your professional world
 - Pursue dissertation research.

* Zoom workshop discussion of paper topics & approaches (week 5, Oct 12)

1. Paper

You will *write* and *present* a thesis paper on a topic related to course content and your area of DPT practice led research. I encourage you to investigate the issue from the perspective of your discipline and area(s) of research interest.

a. Guidelines for the Paper:

The paper should include (description categories below correspond to those of the grading rubric) . . .

1) Content and argument

a) Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).

- Example of a thesis statement: The missional church movement, especially its emphasis on incarnational ministry, provides valuable insight for Christian leadership in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.

Note: The DPT PLR topic in this thesis statement is “Christian leadership in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.”

b) Describe your topic.

c) Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.

- d) Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms and interact with them vis-à-vis your view, where and when appropriate.
- 2) Form and Style:
 - a) Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., avoid excessive first-person discourse, colloquialisms (academic differs from conversational voice), and passive voice (use active).
 - b) Use and document a *minimum* of fifteen scholarly resources. Given the limitations on accessing libraries, you may need to rely more on journal articles than other normal circumstances.
 - c) Accurately document sources according to the [MDC Style Guide](#).
 - d) Paper length: 20–25 pages. Not to exceed 8,000 words.
 - e) Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
 - f) Use footnotes.

2. Guidelines for Presentation

- 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.

3. Padlet Feedback

- a. Purpose:
Provides experience in responding to and contributing to your class colleagues' projects. It provides the opportunity to develop professional skills in academic interaction that takes places at professional and academic conferences.
- b. Description:
Each student prepares a critical evaluation of the papers presented by their class colleagues.

- 1) The critique:
 - a) Remember to be charitable; not only Christian, but since academia is a small guild, it is self-preservation.
 - 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 interact with the relevant secondary literature?
 - Does it bring the PLR topic into conversation with an area of theology?
- 2) Post your critical evaluation for each student in the Paper Padlet—see A2L outline, Paper Padlet. Evaluations can be written, audio, or audio-visual.

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.