

Ethics, Religion and International Politics

International Studies 600 / Theology 563
Boston College, Fall 2010
Mon/Wed 3:00 - 4:15pm; discussion section TBA

Professor Erik Owens

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Course description:

This class examines diverse religious and secular models for relating ethics to international affairs, as well as specific areas of international politics where ethical questions are likely to arise, including sovereignty, terrorism, peacemaking, human rights, globalization, economic justice, and the use of force in war or humanitarian interventions. Special attention is given to theological perspectives and religious actors.

Course Readings:

Most of the course readings will be posted online at our class' BC Share site for you to print, read and **bring to class**. In addition, **the following texts have been ordered at the BC bookstore** or may be purchased online:

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Norton, 2007)
- John Carlson and Erik Owens, eds., *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics* (Georgetown, 2003)
- Michael Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War: Torture, Assassination, and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge, 2009)
- John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Harvard, 2007).
- Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* [4e] (Basic Books, 2006)

Suggested readings about many topics are provided for those who want to dig deeper into the issues. You will not be responsible for this material on papers or your exam, though it will help you in class discussions as well as in your exams and papers.

You should also consult a variety of news sources regularly throughout the week. My suggestions:

- **Council on Foreign Relations: Religion & Foreign Policy Initiative** (www.cfr.org/religioninitiative)
The U.S. foreign policy Establishment. Their weekly email newsletters are highly recommended.
- **Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life** (www.pewforum.org)
Influential source for nonpartisan info, analysis and polls; their email newsletters are excellent.
- **The Immanent Frame** (http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame)
Long-form blog posts on secularism, religion and the public sphere.
- **Muslim-West Facts Initiative** (www.muslimwestfacts.com)
Gallup World Poll of opinion leaders in the West and the Muslim world
- **Weekly newsmagazines:** *Economist, Atlantic, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek*
- **International affairs sections of major media sites:**
Newspapers: *WaPo, NYT, WSJ, Boston Globe, CSM*; foreign papers if you read the language
Radio: BBC, NPR
Television: American networks, CNN, BBC, perhaps Al Jazeera English
- **Aggregators:** Arts & Letters Daily (www.aldaily.com), Google News (use keywords), etc.

Course requirements:

- 1. Participation and presentations (10%):** Active and informed participation is crucial to understanding this material, so you will be graded on a balance of quality and quantity of participation. Students are expected to attend each class, complete all the required reading, contribute to class discussions, and submit assignments on time. In addition, each student must **initiate 5 posts on our course blog (on BC Share) and comment on 10 others** during the semester.
- 2. Three short papers (60%):** Students will write three short essays, each 4-5 pages in length (double-spaced), on an assigned topic. Papers must demonstrate critical understanding of the key themes and readings of that portion of the course. Each is worth 20% of your final grade; due dates listed below.
- 3. Final exam (30%):** Closed-book, in-class, comprehensive final exam, Tuesday Dec 21, 9am-12pm. *[Date can change by unanimous vote.]* A study guide will be distributed in advance of the exam; students are encouraged to study in groups outside of class.

The grading scale:

- A = excellent work** (A = 95-100; A- = 90-94)
B = good work (B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82)
C = adequate work (C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72)
D = poor work (D = 60-69)
F = inadequate or insufficient work (59 & below)

Academic integrity:

I don't need to elaborate on the obvious seriousness of academic integrity in an ethics course. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university's policy on this matter at www.bc.edu/integrity. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to your class dean and judged by the academic integrity committee in your school. If you are found responsible for violating the policy, penalties may include a failing grade as well as possible probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the violation. Please talk to me about any questions you may have.

SYLLABUS:

Part One: Religion and the Political Order

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|---------------------|---|
| (1) Wed 9/8 | Ethics, religion and international politics
<i>What's going on here?</i> |
| (2) Mon 9/13 | Religion and international relations theory
<i>Why was 9/11 a surprise to so many people?</i> |
| (3) Wed 9/15 | Secularization and secularism in international relations
<i>Is the world around us "secular"?</i> |
| *** Thu 9/16 | Panel discussion: Humanitarian Intervention and the "Responsibility to Protect"
<i>David Hollenbach, SJ (BC), Mahmood Mamdani (Columbia), Alan Wolfe (BC)</i>
Higgins 300, 5:30-7:00pm |
| (4) Mon 9/20 | Sovereignty: past, present, future
<i>Who's in charge here? What happens when no one is?</i> |
| (5) Wed 9/22 | State/religion in comparative perspective
<i>What's the difference between religious freedom and "separation of church & state"?</i> |
| (6) Mon 9/27 | The clash of civilizations?
<i>Do Turkey and Sudan prove Huntington's point?</i> |

Part Two: Global Ethics and the Ethics of Globalization

- (7) Wed 9/29 **Cosmopolitanism and patriotism**
What is citizenship today?
- *** Fri 10/1 **PAPER #1 DUE**
- (8) Mon 10/4 **Boundaries and borders**
Are political boundaries morally relevant? Who is our neighbor?
- (9) Wed 10/6 **Immigration and national identity**
What does immigration policy say about a nation's values?
- *** Mon 10/11 *Columbus Day break*
- (10) Wed 10/13 **Religion, ethics and United States foreign policy**
*Is a "moral foreign policy" irresponsible—and thus immoral?
Should the U.S. government support foreign religious groups?*
- (11) Mon 10/18 **Economic justice and development aid**
What makes the good life possible? What if foreign aid makes it worse?
- (12) Wed 10/20 **international law & local justice**
Whose justice should prevail?
- (13) Mon 10/25 **Human rights: the history of an idea**
Were human rights "invented"?
- (14) Wed 10/27 **Human rights and God**
Are human rights religious and/or universal?

Part Three: Peace, Violence and the Use of Force

- (15) Mon 11/1 **Religious traditions of nonviolence**
Is pacifism nonviolent?
- (16) Wed 11/3 **Christian Realism**
Why is Reinhold Niebuhr so popular in the Obama era?
- *** Fri 11/5 **PAPER #2 DUE**
- (17) Mon 11/8 **Introducing the just war tradition**
Is war a moral act? When is it legitimate to attack?
- (18) Wed 11/10 ***Jus in bello***
Must war be hell?
- (19) Mon 11/15 **Assassination and targeted killing**
*What are the implications of using unmanned drones in wartime?
Are targeted killings legitimate acts of war?*
- (20) Wed 11/17 ***Jus ad vim*: sanctions, blockades, and sieges**
What coercive options exist short of war?
- (21) Mon 11/22 **Islam and the just war**
Is jihad an ethic of restraint?
- *** Nov 24-28 *Thanksgiving break*
- (22) Mon 11/29 **Terrorism**
What are religious terrorists thinking? Can violence ever be "religious"?
- (23) Wed 12/1 **Torture, interrogation and punishment**
Is torture ever justified?
- *** Fri 12/3 **PAPER #3 DUE**

(24) Mon 12/6 **Jus post bellum and religious peacebuilding**
How can religion be/come a source of reconciliation?

(25) Wed 12/8 **Conclusion**
So, what?

*** Tues 12/21 **FINAL EXAM**