

Political Studies Program, Summer 2015
RELIGION AND POLITICS
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In this brief survey, we will consider the thoughts of a number of canonical authors who wrestle with Biblical religion. Augustine offers us the City of God and the City of Man; Hobbes tries to combine the two cities; Tocqueville asks that we separate religion from democratic politics in order to save both; Nietzsche encourages us to let go of Biblical religion in order that man himself may be saved.

We will read these works with a view to moving in three directions at once: inward, with a view to the meaning of the ideas themselves; outward, to other ideas in the canon that offer different paths; and outward, again, to the world around us, in the hope that what we are reading illuminates that world. Come to class having read and re-read the assignment for the day. Class will involve both guidance on my part and participation on your part.

Monday, July 27, 2015

Augustine

Readings:

- Selections from Augustine, *City of God*

Discussion Questions:

1. What, for Augustine, is at issue in the fall of Rome?
2. How is man to make sense of the problem of evil?
3. Can there be “man” without God?
4. In light of the problem of sin, what is the place of politics?

Tuesday, July 28, 2015

Hobbes

Readings:

- Hobbes, handout
- Selections from Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Hobbes begin *Leviathan* with a chapter on “sense”?

2. Why is he so opposed to Aristotle?
3. Why does man need an “arbiter”?
4. Why does each nation need a Moses?

Wednesday, July 29, 2015

Tocqueville

Readings:

- Aristocratic Age versus Democratic Age
- Selections from Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
 - Author’s Introduction (pp. 3–15)
 - Vol. I, Part 1, Ch. 2 (pp. 27–36, ending at “in the New England states.”)
 - Vol. I, Part 1, Ch. 5 (“On the Township System in America,” pp. 57–58 and “On the Political Effects . . .”, pp. 82–84, ending at “malcontents to obedience”)
 - Vol. I, Part 2, Ch. 6 (pp. 225–35)
 - Vol. I, Part 2, Ch. 9 (pp. 278–88, ending at “the strength it still preserves”)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the “story” of liberalism that Tocqueville tells?
2. Why is Tocqueville a “mediational” theorist?
3. What is Tocqueville’s understanding of the psyche?
4. Why does Tocqueville give so much attention to the Puritans?

Thursday, July 30, 2015

Tocqueville

Readings:

- Aristocratic Age versus Democratic Age
- Selections from Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
 - Vol. II, Part 1, Chs. 1–2 (pp. 403–10)
 - Vol. II, Part 1, Ch. 5 (pp. 417–19, ending at “abandoned to itself”)
 - Vol. II, Part 1, Chs. 7–8 (pp. 425–28)
 - Vol. II, Part 1, Ch. 20 (pp. 469–72)
 - Vol. II, Part 2, Ch. 5 (pp. 489–92)
 - Vol. II, Part 2, Ch. 8 (pp. 500–03)
 - Vol. II, Part 3, Ch. 12 (pp. 573–76)
 - Vol. II, Part 3, Ch. 21 (pp. 606–17)
 - Vol. II, Part 4, Ch. 6 (pp. 661–65)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the “American philosophical method,” and why is it so important?
2. How may religion maintain its hold in the democratic age?
3. What is self-interest rightly understood?
4. Why is the “end of history” quietude?

Friday, July 31, 2015

Nietzsche

Readings:

- Nietzsche, First Essay, *The Genealogy of Morals* (trans. Walter Kaufmann)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the problem with thinking of man in terms of “interests”?
2. At what historical moment does the degeneration of man set in?
3. What is religion, for Nietzsche?
4. What is the crisis of Europe, on Nietzsche’s reading?