

Writing 100: Does God Choose
Sides?
American Politics and The
Bible
Spring 2006



Dr. Deborah Appler Tues, Thurs 12:50-2:00 PPHC 113

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office hours: by appointment; virtual on blackboard Wednesdays 9-10 PM (in the virtual classroom)

Course Description:


Exit polls following the 2004 presidential election indicated that religious beliefs and issues greatly influenced its outcome. Matters such as abortion, gay marriage, the death penalty, euthanasia, and war set off conversations, often heated, about where God stands on these issues. People of faith continue to read the same Bible yet often draw opposite conclusions concerning what these sacred texts say about social and political issues. This course will provide opportunities to read, discuss, and write about how politics and religious rhetoric are interwoven in today's American society.

By the end of this course you should have obtained the following:

A sampling of the Bible's influence in American Politics

 An understanding of the various ways religious traditions, particularly Christians (because 85-90% of US Citizens identify themselves as such) use the Bible to make their decisions on social and moral issues


 A comprehensive review of Writing and language skills

 An ability to communicate using several voices through written and oral means

Required Texts:

 Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook. 6th edition*. Boston: St. Martins Press, 2002.

 Wallis, Jim. *God's Politics. Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't get it*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

 West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters. Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

 Dionne, E. J., Jr., Elshtain, and Drogosz, eds. *One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics*. Wash., DC: Brookings Inst, 2004.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/moravianlibrary/Doc?id=10077274>

Course Requirements:

Each assignment except the portfolio and the group presentation will go through the following process (drafts before the final work that will be work-shopped with a partner in the group and in consultation with me. Below is the workshop process:


Writing Workshop Process

You will be a member of a group with two other students who will serve as your peer mentors and reviewers throughout the semester. Every Friday following a paper's draft deadline will be used to workshop this written material. Therefore every student must have his/her draft ready to exchange with a member of his/her group by class time on its due date. Each reader will prepare comments and HELPFUL critiques to be shared individually with the writer during the workshop. Group readers will rotate within the group with every assignment. Remember, writing is a process. Please be respectful and helpful. Sharing work is a very vulnerable thing to do. Please inform me immediately of any concerns that arise from this process. Collegiality will also be reflected in the overall course grade. Drafts will not receive a letter grade (but your hard work will be reflected in your final writing assignment grade).


10% Class Participation

This grade will also be based on the following:


 **Individual meetings with Deborah** (15-30 minutes) at least every 4 weeks

 **Class attendance and participation (with all assignments on time):** no more than 3 excused absences; 5 total. Each absence after 3 will be reflected in your final grade (1/3 a letter grade for each day)

 **Active involvement in class writing workshops** (see below for details)

 **Weekly posting to the blackboard threaded discussion** During the semester class members will post to blackboard's threaded discussion area a 2-3 paragraph reaction to a reading or share an example that you came across that week (via newspaper, music, movies, tv) in which religion and politics intersect. In addition, each student should respond to the postings of two of your peers EVERY WEEK. While this assignment is required and will significantly impact your participation grade, it will not be graded. Each student will serve one week this semester as a web proctor to make sure that the discussions are respectful. One's participation grade will be penalized if the discussion attacks another's personal beliefs.

 **evaluations from your peers in your small group**

 **your willingness to provide helpful (oral and written) input to your peers as you evaluate their work in class**

25% Portfolio: This portfolio should contain all pre-writing practices, drafts, assigned Bedford selected handbook exercises (these should be completed on line or handwritten), and other writing assignments that occur over the course of the semester. Of the essays that you complete throughout the semester, choose two

for further revision to include in the portfolio. The final portfolio is due **No later than April 28th by 6:00 PM in my office.**

5% Writing Center: Each student must provide evidence that she/he has worked with the writing tutor and that the feedback was integrated into the written project **NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 9.** Those who visit the writing center more than once during the semester will receive the following (forgiveness on a missed class, forgiveness on a late paper).


10% Personal Voice Paper: This **2-3 page paper** (double spaced) should respond to the following:

- What role do you think that religion should play in American politics? Back up your response with some concrete examples that have helped to form your opinion.


Draft Due Feb 5th ; Workshop Feb 7th final due Feb 9th

10% Critique Paper (4-5 pages)

Choose a chapter from any of the three assigned class texts (West, Wallis, others) and offer a critique of its argument (or thesis) keeping in mind the following:

 What are the major arguments addressed in the article?

 On what evidence or logic does this argument rely?


 How is or isn't the argument convincing? Feel free to offer a counter argument.


Make certain to consult the *Bedford Handbook*, Part IX on Critical Thinking

Draft due Feb 16th , Workshop Feb 21st , Final due Feb 23rd

10% Lecture or Political Speech article – 3-4 pages (double spaced) (Audience:

popular. Aim for *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek*, and so forth). You can go two ways with this assignment:

 Write a political speech that integrates religion and politics (make sure to clarify the audience and the office) Feel free to write one for a real candidate and a real situation- play speech writer. Also, feel free to use creative writing to get this information across.

 report on a political speech (state of the union message, senate confirmation, possible related lecture at Moravian or Lehigh) and write an article highlighting how religion is evoked by the speaker to forward a political objective. Allow the insights of your course reading to strengthen your article.

Draft Due Mar 16th , workshop March 21st , Final due March 23rd

10% Group Presentation (Audience: this class; 20-25 minutes)

Prepare a presentation based on a section of the syllabus material that interests you and has not been covered. Use some form of multimedia (Power Point; Music; Poetry, Film, Video—feel free to create your own; integration of media is key here!)

Presentations will take place the week of April 11 and 13 .

20% Research Paper (Academic Voice: 10-12 pages) Choose one of the following to research:

- a politician or religious leader who has employed biblical rhetoric to further a political and religious agenda in the United States. This person can be current or historical as long as he or she has impacted American culture. Your paper should include a discussion of the religious issues that drive this person's public policy. (Get to know the person, his/her religious beliefs, his/her speeches, writings, sermons, or other media of influence. How does this person interpret biblical texts and biblical authority to make his or her political case?). Some possible candidates for exploration are: George W Bush, Ken Rove, Bill Frist, Jerry Falwell, Rick Warren, Hillary Clinton, Jesse Jackson, Pope Benedict, Cornel West—you get the idea. Feel free to go local or global.
- a political issue that has religious implications (or vice versa). Research how politicians and religious personnel have used biblical texts to make their points and to impact American culture. Some possible issues: euthanasia, Shiavo case, the ten commandments in court rooms, death penalty, gay marriage, abortion, war, slavery, manifest destiny, founding of the US, racism, suffrage movements, etc.

Draft due April 20th ; Workshop April 25th; Final paper due April 27th on blackboard

My Expectations for all research papers---I want:

- A clear thesis statement that lays out the primary issue including the position that will be argued throughout the paper.
- Support for this position through a good integration of primary and secondary source material (articles, books). Use 8-10 sources legitimate sources (discussed in class) and only 2 from internet sites (articles taken from Library online sources do not count as internet sources)
- A well written paper with careful attention to grammar, sentence structure, flow of argument, use of footnotes and bibliographical notation.
- **DO NOT USE WIKIPEDIA ONLINE- USE LEGITIMATE SOURCES!!! WITH AUTHORS AND REPUTABILITY**

Make certain to consult the *Bedford Handbook*, Part X on Research Writing

Deadlines:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Draft Due</u>	<u>Workshop Date</u>	<u>Final to Deborah</u>
Personal Voice	February 5	February 7	February 9
Critique	February 16	February 21	February 23
Political Speech	March 16	March 21	March 23
Group Presentation			April 11 or 13
Research Paper	April 20	April 25	April 27

Course Outline

Jan 17, 19 What Is The Bible? Why Do Politicians Care?

Readings:

- Wallis, xiii-xxiv
- Dionne et. al, 1-9
- West, 1-24

Jan 24, 26 Is God Political?

Readings:

- Wallis, 3-42
- Dionne et.al, 13-38, 94-100
- Bedford xxi-xxviii (do tutorials 1, 2, 4)

Jan 31 Feb 2, Should people of faith be political? Intelligent Design and Darwin

Readings:

- *Wallis, 43-86*
- Flowers, Ronald. *That Godless Court? Supreme Court Decisions On Church-State Relationships*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 99-128
- Resource on Intelligent Design and Evolution
- Review Bedford Chapter 3

Recommended Reading:

- West, 145-172

Feb 7, 9 Should Religion Play a Role in Choosing Supreme Court Justices?

Readings:

- Flowers, Ronald. *That Godless Court? Supreme Court Decisions On Church-State Relationships*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 1-30.
- Wallis, 87-107

Feb 14, 16, Valentines Day: Make Love not War?

Readings:

- West, 63-106
- Bailey, Wilma. “*You Shall Not Kill*” or “*You Shall Not Murder*”? *The Assault on the Biblical Text*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005, 1-25.
- Wallis 108-36

Feb 21, 23 A Consistent Ethic of Life: Abortion and Capital Punishment

Readings:

- West, 173-218
- Wallis 297-306
- Bedford, Chapter 53

Feb 28, Mar 2 Library Tour (Required) and Cornel West

Readings:

- West, 107-144 (make certain all of West has been read)

Mar 7, 9 SPRING BREAK: HAVE FUN!!!!!!

Mar 14, 16 One Nation Under God? Imperialism, God, and Politics

Readings:

- Wallis 137-71
- Bedford, Part IX Critical Thinking

Mar 21, 23 Middle East: The Palestinian and Israeli Conflict

Readings:

- Wallis, 172-186
- Ronald Young, “American Jews, Christians, and Muslims Working Together for Peace in the Middle East.” *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace Building*. Ed. by David R. Smock. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 2002, 63-72.
- Lerner, Michael. *Healing Israel/Palestine. A Path to Peace and Reconciliation*. Berkeley, Tikkun, 2003, 171-244. (skim)

Mar 28, 30 Global Justice and 8th Century Prophets

Readings:

- Wallis, 187-208
- Sachs, Jeffrey. *The End of Poverty. Economic Possibilities for Our Time.* New York: Penguin Press, 2005, xv-25.
- Bedford, Chapter 49

April 4, 6 Blessed Are the Poor?!!!

Readings:

- Wallis, 209-41
- Sachs, Jeffrey. *The End of Poverty. Economic Possibilities for Our Time.* New York: Penguin Press, 2005, 347-68.
- Bedford, Chapter 51

April 11, 13 Class Presentations

Readings:

- Wallis, 241-93

April 18, 20 Spiritual Values and Social Issues:
Racism and Gay Marriage

Readings:

- Wallis, 307-42
- Handouts on Gay Marriage and Sexuality and the Bible Issues
- Bedford, Research and Documentation

April 25, 27 Global Aids Crisis and Sex Education

Readings:

- Wallis, 307-42

Evaluation:

Bedford exercises, all drafts, pre-writing exercises (research notes, ideas), blackboard threaded discussions (where information can be shared with each other) should be placed in the portfolio. All of these will receive credit but not a letter grade. The same is true for the following: Students who regularly attend class, who actively provide constructive feedback to their peers, who participate in class discussions, attend scheduled meetings with the professor, and who meet with the writing tutor at least once will meet the minimum credit for this course. Each student will provide in their portfolio a peer evaluation (not graded) for each member of his or her peer group including him or herself.

A student's final grade will be determined by the level of commitment he or she has to the writing process. A grade of B will be awarded to every student who meets all deadlines, fully participates in the workshops, attends class, and completes all of the other assignments listed above.

This means that those who find writing difficult will be rewarded for working hard to improve their skills even if their writing continues to need improvement. In addition, many past writing students have asked to be graded on individual assignments in order to see how

their work would be graded in regular classes. Therefore I will give letter grades on final papers and not drafts. Those who are concerned about the A range will have a better feel for where their grade stands overall on PAPERS ALONE. Attendance, deadlines, workshops, and so forth are factored into the final grade. If you have questions about your performance, do not hesitate to ask me!! I will grade each FINAL PAPER based on the following:

General Grading Rubric

Grade Range	%	Definition
A	100-93	Signifies an exceptional and sophisticated level of achievement with a superb command of the course material that is creatively applied to oral and written class assignments; given to students who present insightful and novel views of subject matter whose arguments are critical, well-written, inventive and fully supported.
A-	92-90	
B+	89-87	Indicates high achievement; given for work that examines issues thoroughly and critically and that demonstrates a good grasp of the material while creatively applying it at most levels; arguments are well written, well supported and display some novel thinking; work includes correct citation and an accurate bibliography.
B	86-83	
B-	82-80	
C+	79-77	Represents an adequate level of achievement and only a narrow mastery of the material; uncritical about tacit assumptions; arguments reflect the subject matter but evidence is sometimes insufficient, inadequate, or poorly written.
C	76-73	
C-	72-70	
D+	69-67	Indicates little understanding of the subject matter and lack of awareness of critical and differing views; arguments are superficial and merely descriptive.
D	68-63	
D-	62-60	
F	59-0	Represents no comprehension of the material and a lack of ability or willingness to engage in the class. May also be given in cases of plagiarism

Cheating, plagiarism, disruptive classroom behavior and all that other ugly stuff: I encourage you to study in groups with other students, as well as to do additional research on your own. There is a wealth of material available about religion. You may use any books, websites, and other resources to facilitate your learning. However, all work you turn in must be your own. When citing someone else's idea, please use proper documentation (see *Bedford Handbook*). Please consult the

student handbook for more information concerning what constitutes plagiarism. There are severe consequences for such activities.

As religious beliefs are often at the core of one's values and outlook on life, some of the topics dealt with in class may be sensitive issues to you or your classmates and may evoke strong opinions. We will most likely encounter a wide range of differences of viewpoints. Questioning and disagreeing is fine, but hostile behavior and intolerance is not. It is essential, therefore, for us to respect the opinions and viewpoints of one another. Anyone who is disrespectful and disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated and may incur disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

Need Assistance?

- If you have questions or problems in terms of doing research or writing a research paper, consult with me.
- If you have learning disabilities, you need to let the professor know about your situation and to follow the following procedures:

Special Learning Needs

It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to identify themselves and request accommodations through the appropriate office.

For health, physical, mobility, hearing, visual, mental health/psychiatric, or drug and alcohol disabilities, contact the director of counseling, 1307 Main Street; 610 861-1510.

For disabilities that affect cognition (learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or ADHD), contact the director of learning services, 1307 Main Street; 610 861-1510.

The student must provide documentation of a disability and a rationale for the requested accommodations from a professional with expertise in the condition. The documentation must include a specific diagnosis and a thorough report. Required documentation for learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder must include the results of a comprehensive psychoeducational assessment (including all subtest scores) that evaluates the intellectual functioning, achievement, and information-processing domains of cognitive functioning. The diagnosis must be based on DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. In addition, documentation for ADHD should include evidence of both early and current impairment, a diagnostic interview with third-party input (teachers or parents), and an interpretive summary that explains how the disability is a substantial limitation to learning. Testing should be recent

(administered within the past three years prior to enrollment) for learning disabilities and ADHD.

It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodations well in advance of need in order to give the College a reasonable amount of time to evaluate the documentation and implement the accommodation.

<For further information, see the Student Handbook>