

Writing 100 F: Does God Choose Sides? American Politics and the Bible

Spring 2009 Tues, Thurs 10:20- 11:30 Reeves 212



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Course Description:

Exit polls following the 2004 presidential election indicated that religious beliefs and issues greatly influenced its outcome. In 2008 similar polls illustrated a shift in the foci of American evangelicals who in 2000 and 2004 helped to elect George W. Bush but in 2008 helped Barak Obama win the presidency. Regardless, the 2008 election was steeped in religious rhetoric that mobilized religious voters to choose based on religious beliefs. Articles and interviews abound about the faith of John McCain and Barack Obama. Youtube flourished with videos of Sarah Palin's exorcism, Obama's renegade pastor Jeremiah Wright, and McCain's association with Reverend John Hagee. Matters such as healthcare, war, abortion, gay marriage, the death penalty, and euthanasia 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 and Policies
-  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 taste of how biblical scholars across the spectrum read the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures
-  A review of Writing and language skills
-  An ability to communicate using several voices through written and oral means
-  Practice in using technology for research and writing and citing them in an academic style

Required Texts:

-  Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook*. 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.

 Shiva, Vandana. *Biopiracy. The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*. Cambridge University: South End Press, 1997.

 Farmer, Paul. *Pathologies of Power. Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

 Berlinerblau, Jacques. *Thumpin It. The Use and Abuse of the Bible in Today's Presidential Politics*. Westminster John Knox, 2007.

 Access to a Bible (there are copies in the library or online, e.g.: <http://nccusa.org/welcome/sitemap.html>)

 Assigned articles scanned and available on blackboard

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 peer group and in consultation with me). Below is the workshop process:

Writing Workshop Process

You will be a member of a group with two or three other students who will serve as your peer mentors and reviewers throughout the semester. Following a paper's draft deadline you will have class time to work with your group on each others' papers. Therefore every student must have his/her draft ready to exchange with his/her group **by class time on the draft due date**. These should be uploaded on the group pages on BlackBoard for your group members **and** in the draft section of the assignment area on Blackboard for the instructor. Each reader will prepare comments and HELPFUL critiques to be shared individually with the writer during the workshop and **these must be prepared by the day of the workshop and handed in with the portfolio**. Remember, writing is a process. Please be respectful and helpful. If your drafts or final papers are late, it impacts the entire group and writing process. Lateness not approved by the instructor (abduction by aliens is not a valid excuse unless you can show proof), your grade will be penalized. 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. **The Research Paper draft will receive point value**). At the end of the semester you will evaluate your group members as well as yourself in a peer evaluation, which will be explained and distributed later in the semester and will be considered in the grade.

For every paper turned in, I want you to add a paragraph that evaluates your paper. Where do you think that the strengths are? What do you think that professor will say about it?

Submitting Papers:


- All papers to the instructor must be submitted electronically on BlackBoard by the due date.
- Please place your names on the document itself and save it as follows:
last name reflection paper draft
- Please submit in a format that I can open. If you are not using Microsoft Office, then please save as an RTF.


Writing Deadlines:


<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Draft Due</u>	<u>Workshop Date</u>	<u>Final to Deborah</u>
Personal Voice	January 29	February 3	February 5
Letter to Official	February 12	February 17	February 19
Critique Paper	February 26	March 10	March 12
Research Paper Proposal			March 19
Group Writing Presentation			Weeks of April 7 and 14
Research Paper	April 21	April 28	May 2
Portfolio			May 2
Lebensfeld Paper			


10% Class Participation (total of 250 possible points)

This grade will also be based on the following:

 **Individual meetings with the instructor** (15-30 minutes) at least 1 time this semester if not more. (20 points each meeting)

 **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 (10 points a class with 5 automatic points for just showing up and a scale of 1-5 points a class for more class involvement—a total possible 155 points allowing for 3 missed classes- but extra credit for perfect attendance!)

 **Active involvement in class writing workshops** (see above for details) Total of 10 points a workshop (50 possible)

 **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 March 10th**. Those who visit the writing center more than once during the semester will receive the following (forgiveness on a missed class, or forgiveness of a late paper-one time deal). You may take a paper from ANY CLASS to the tutor. (25 points for one visit)

10 % Double Entry Journal (Total of 250 Points).

Class members will post to the Journal page **each Tuesday (Jan 27; Feb 3, 10, 17, 24; Mar 10, 17, 24, 31; Apr 7, 14, 21, 28)**. Choose one of the readings for the week and create a two sided entry as follows:

Outline: 10 points the reading makes A brief summary of the article/book	Comments: Why do you agree or disagree with the author? What are your thoughts? Critiques?
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While this assignment is required and will significantly impact your participation grade, it will not receive a letter grade but points for posting it on time and completing the assignment. **Keep in mind to not post these entries will severely lower your class participation grade.** (20 points a posting and 5 points off for lateness—total 250 points- you get 10 free points)

20% Portfolio: total of 500 points and should contain:

- Bedford selected handbook exercises (these should be completed on line or handwritten) – 50 points
- A third draft of one of your shorter papers that includes the instructor’s feedback. Include with this copies of your peers’ feedback, writing center feedback, and your drafts of the paper. 100 points
- A final draft of your academic paper that includes the feedback of both your peers and your instructor. Include your first draft and the feedback. 250 points
- Peer review sheets (evaluate each group member including yourself) 100 points

The final portfolio is due **No later than May 2nd by 6:00 PM in the assignment section on BlackBoard for Portfolio.**

10% Personal Voice Paper: (250 points) 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 opinions. Include reflections of class readings.

Draft Due Jan 29 ; Workshop Feb 3; final due Feb 5

10% Letter to an Elected Official – 3-4 pages (double spaced; 250 pts)

(Audience: Government Official)

Write a letter to a Senator or member of Congress (worthy to be sent to him/her) with your views on how he/she should vote on a “moral issue” (e.g. the environment, education, poverty, health care, gay marriage). Research some of the legislation that is in the works or that you believe should be written and supported by the official. Tie this together with issues of Bible and politics. A rubric will be distributed with more specifics.

Draft Due Feb 12 , workshop Feb 17 , Final due Feb 19


10% Critique Paper (250 points; 4-5 pages) (audience- Academic Journal)


Choose one of the following:

- Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy* (you may focus on a section of the book)
- Jacques Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It* (you may focus on a section)

and offer a critique of its argument (or thesis) keeping in mind the following:

 What are the major arguments addressed in the book/chapter?

 On what evidence or logic does this argument rely? (How does he/she make a case?)

 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 26, Workshop Mar 10, Final due Mar 12

10% Group Writing Presentation (Audience: this class; 20-25 minutes; 250 points). 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, Create a blog or Wiki—feel free to create your own; integration of technology media is key here!)
Presentations will take place the weeks of April 7 and 14.

20% Research Paper (Academic Voice: 7-9 pages; 500 points)

Points broken down as follows:

- Research Proposal (200 points). This should include the following:
 - A statement of the question that you want to explore in your research paper and what you hope to find. This should be at least a paragraph or two.
 - A statement of what it is that interests you about this topic and why.
 - Include a preliminary bibliography that contains at least 5 sources that you will use to answer your question. **This is due March 19**
- Final Paper First Draft (300 points): This draft will be rewritten for the portfolio) and should contain
 - A complete draft of the paper with a clear thesis a set up of the problem
 - A clearly written and argued draft (check grammar, spelling, flow of argument, etc.)
 - A completed bibliography and properly cited

Please set up a meeting with the instructor to fine-tune your research question. You may choose a topic that you are interested in but it must be approved.

Possible types of questions to research:

- How did the issue(s) of abortion and/or same-sex marriage impact the 2008 presidential election? Why do these issues motivate religious voters?
- Hillary Clinton called gender the glass ceiling yet to be broken in American politics. Do you think that there were gender differences in the ways that Hillary Clinton and/or Sarah Palin were handled by the media? Do you think that biblical teachings about women have impacted gender attitudes for US voters?
- Substitute race for gender in the above question.
- Access to Health insurance for all Americans (even Universal Healthcare) has become a hot button issue in the United States especially in the 2008 election. Do you think that this is or should be a biblical/political issue especially in light of the call for justice found in biblical texts?
- How has Barack Obama's faith background impacted his political policies

and rhetoric (images and words that he uses to persuade voters)?

- How has biblical rhetoric been used by politicians, especially George W. Bush, to make a case for the war in Iraq? You may want to consider issues of imperialism and Manifest Destiny. (see *God's Politics*)
- Much of the political rhetoric in the last three elections centered on concern for the Middle Class in America rather than on the poor who are often ignored. How is or isn't our national budget a moral document? (See *God's Politicst*). The focus of this paper can be domestic or foreign.
- A topic of your choice that deals with religion and politics and their intersection. These must be approved by me beforehand.

Research Paper Proposal Due: March 19

Draft due April 21; Workshop Apr 28 ; Final paper due May 2

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 legitimate sources (discussed in class and in the library meeting) and only 2 from internet sites (articles taken from Library online journals 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*

Extra Credit Opportunities: Moravian College and Seminary hosts amazing speakers and several of them relate to our class topic. The following lectures are announced and eligible for extra credit of 5 points:

- Tuesday, January 20th Darius Rejali, Ph.D ,“Torture and Democracy: What Now?” 7:00 PM Prosser Auditorium
- Thursday, January 22 Film: “I Believe in America” 7:15 Prosser Auditorium.
- Tuesday, January 27: Martin Luther King, Jr. Program. Tim Wise, “Beyond Diversity. Challenging Racism in an Age of Backlash.” 7:30 Prosser
- Thursday, February 6: Teach-in on Global Warming
- If there is a community lecture that deals with politics and religion, you may attend it if you get it approved by Deborah. Each event is worth 5 points, which will be added to your grade once a one page response to the lecture is turned in to me no later than one week after the event.

Course Outline



Jan 20 Introduction: Inauguration Day!

Readings:

- Moravian Best Writing Booklet- Choose 2 essays

Answer the following for the first week of the discussion board: What makes these essays good writing?

- Wallis, *God's Politics*, xiii-xxiv
- View or Read Obama's Inaugural Speech. Listen for use of religion.

Jan 22 What Is The Bible? Why Do Politicians Care?

Readings:

- Meacham, Jon. *American Gospel. God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of the Nation*. New York: Random House, 2006, 3-35. On BB

Jan 27, 29 Is God Political? Do Politics and Faith Mix?

Readings:

- **Bedford xxi-xxviii (do tutorials 1, 2, 4)**
- Wallis, *God's Politics*, 3-42; 72-86
- Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It*, 1-32

Feb 3, 5 Food, Agriculture and the Environment: Part I

Readings:

- Gen 1:26-28; Psalm 24; Col 1:16
- Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy* (start reading)
- Democracy Now Podcast: Al Gore's Nobel Speech on the Environment, December 11, 2007
http://www.democracynow.org/2007/12/11/it_is_time_to_make_peace
- Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It*, 33-45

Optional:

- View "An Inconvenient Truth" or any other film on the environment.
- Wallis, 307- 320

Feb 10, 12 Food, Agriculture and the Environment: Part II

Readings:

- Shiva, Vandana, *Biopiracy*. (finish reading)
- Peters, Rebecca Todd, "Supporting Community Farming," *Justice in the Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community, and World*. Ed. P.

Brubaker, Peters and Stivers. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006, 17-28. BB

- Owens, Marcia Allen, “Consuming Responsibly,” *Justice in the Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community, and World*. Ed. P. Brubaker, Peters and Stivers. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006, 40-9. BB

Feb 17, 19 A Consistent Ethic of Life: Abortion

Readings:

- Numbers 5
- Strickland, Ruth. “Abortion: Pro-choice versus Pro-life.” *Moral Controversies in American Politics*. R. Tatalovich et al., eds. London: Sharpe, 2005, 3-35 BB
- Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It*, 46-59
- **Bedford, Chapter 53 (review)**

Recommended:

- History of Abortion in Religious groups
- http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm
- <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/abortionuslegal/a/abortion.htm>

Feb 24, 26 A Consistent Ethic of Life: Capital Punishment

Readings:

- Deuteronomy 5; 19:21 Exodus 20; 21:23–25, Leviticus 24:18–20
- <http://pewforum.org/death-penalty/>
- Wallis 297-306
- Campolo, Tony. “Gun Control,” *Crime*.” Red Letter Christians. A Citizen’s Guide to Faith and Politics. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008, 99-106; 135-150. BB

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Mar 3, 5 Spring Break: Enjoy!!!!

Mar 10, 12 Make Love not War?

Readings:

- Wallis 108-36; 159-171.

Recommended:

- Bailey, Wilma. “*You Shall Not Kill*” or “*You Shall Not Murder*”? *The Assault on the Biblical Text*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005, 1-25. BB
- Smock, David. *Religious Perspectives on War*. Washington DC: US Institute for Peace, 2002, 3-45. BB

Mar 17, 19 Economics and Justice: Part I

Readings:

- The Book of Amos

- Wallis, 209-269
- Stivers, Laura. "Holding Corporations Accountable," *Justice in the Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community, and World*. Ed. P. Brubaker, Peters and Stivers. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006, 65-77. BB

Recommended:

- "From Poverty to Opportunity. A Covenant for a New America"
Sojourners (see BB)

Mar 24, 26 Economics and Justice: Part II

Readings:

- The Book of Hosea
- DeCarlo, Jacqueline. *Fair Trade. A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: One World, 2007, 43-64. BB
- Berlinerblau, Thumpin It, 60-142
- Wallis, 270-296
- **Bedford, Chapter 49**

Mar 31, Ap 2 Health Care: Part I

Readings:

- Jesus Healing Texts; Elijah and Elisha Cycle
- Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 23-134

Apr 7, 9 Health Care: Part II

Readings:

- Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 135-246
- Dube, Musa. "Andrinka! Four Hearts Joined Together. On Becoming Healing-Teachers of African Indigenous Religion/s in HIV & AIDS Prevention." *African Women, Religion, and Health*. Isabel Phiri and S. Nadar, ed. Mary Knoll: Orbis, 2006, 131-156.
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/hiv aids/>

Apr 14, 16 Gender, Race and Bible in American Politics

Readings:

- Wallis, 307-320.
- Michael Eric Dyson. *Come Hell or High Water. Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*, 178-212 BB
- Obama, Barak. "Race" *The Audacity of Hope. Thoughts on Reclaiming The American Dream*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006, 227-270. BB
- Katherine Joyce, "Women's Liberation Through Submission: An Evangelical Anti-Feminism Is Born" Posted on January 11, 2009, Printed on January 13, 2009
<http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/890/> BB
- Rich Moran and Paul Taylor, Pew Report. "Revisiting the Mommy Wars: Politics, Gender, and Parenthood." Pew Research Center. Sept 15, 2008.
<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/709/politics-gender-parenthood>

Recommended:

- Democracy Now, Michael Eric Dyson, Racism, the N Word, July 2007
http://www.democracynow.org/2007/7/18/professor_and_preacher_michael_eric_dyson

Ap 21, 23 Homosexuality, Gay Marriage and Politics

Readings:

- 2 Sam 1:26; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10 (some of these are the “clobber texts.”)
- Wallis, 321-74
- <http://hrc.org> (A comprehensive site on these issues)
- Gagnon, R and D. Via. *Homosexuality and the Bible. Two Views.* Minneapolis: Fortress, on reserve.
- **Bedford, Research and Documentation**

Recommended:

- <http://pewforum.org/gay-marriage/>

Apr 28, 30 Intelligent Design and Darwin

Readings:

- Genesis 1-4
- Flowers, Ronald. *That Godless Court? Supreme Court Decisions On Church-State Relationships.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 99-128
- Intelligent Design Network, “Intelligent Design for Dummies,
<http://www.intelligentdesignnetwork.org/ID%20for%20Dummies.pdf>
- <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=114> candidates on evolution
- **Review Bedford Chapter 3**

Evaluation:

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 (with the exception of the Research Paper draft that will get points).

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 and politics. You may use any books, websites, and other resources to facilitate your learning. **However, all work you turn in must be your own.** You may not take things off the internet or from other sources without properly citing these or you will be charged with plagiarism. 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 and the writing center
- 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>