

Regent University

Robertson School of Government

GOV 604: Christian Foundations of Government

Public Course Syllabus, Spring 2008

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NOTE: ALL INFORMATION IN THIS SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE UNTIL THE START OF CLASS. MOREOVER, THE COURSE MATERIAL AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE UPON NOTICE PROVIDED ON BLACKBOARD OR IN CLASS.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF COURSE

God has blessed the Robertson School of Government (RSG) with a student body diverse in experience and religious backgrounds. Some students are the products of home schooling and/or Christian schools and colleges, and may have received formal biblical instruction each academic year. Other students have attended secular schools, and have developed their understanding of biblical principles primarily through church settings and personal efforts. Some schools and churches have discipled RSG students in doctrine and biblical interpretation, whereas other churches have emphasized rich liturgical tradition and experiential worship.

One of the purposes of this course is to develop a common foundation for all RSG students. The course will include a brief survey of Old Testament and New Testament teachings, and will also consider a history of the church and the history of Regent University. Most of the course will, however, focus on a Christian *worldview*.

A *worldview* is the comprehensive framework of a person's basic beliefs about man, God, nature, and the material world. It is, quite simply, how one views the world. This *worldview* is the result of deeply held beliefs or presuppositions that a person weighs with every thought, decision, or opinion. These presuppositions have consequences. For instance, if one presupposes that man is basically good, then when man commits evil he should be rehabilitated rather than punished. If one presupposes that God created the earth and all of its inhabitants, then man owes a duty to God. If, on the other hand, one presupposes that there is no God, then no duty is owed to Him.

This course will compare and contrast the Christian *worldview* with other worldviews competing for dominance in Western civilization at the start of the new millennium. It will contrast competing worldviews on such questions as where did we come from? What has gone wrong with the world? And what can we do about the evil in the world? This course will also show the logical consequences of each of the competing worldviews.

CONNECTION TO PROGRAM OF STUDY

This course is a foundational course in the Robertson School of Government. The remaining courses in RSG will build upon the principles studied in this course.

KEY COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn or enforce their previous education in Christian *worldview*, and will develop an understanding of alternative *worldviews*.
2. Students will develop a clear, coherent, biblical framework to guide their personal actions, in order to act with integrity in spite of pressure and events. Students will establish boundaries for their own behaviors.
3. Students will be equipped to apply a biblical ethical framework to real-world political situations.

RESOURCES

Required Texts

***The Holy Bible* [any commonly used version will do, but avoid “paraphrase” translations such as *The Living Bible* or *The Message*].**

Pearcey, Nancy. 2003. *Total Truth*. Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books. ISBN 0-8423-1808-9

Lawler, Peter Augustine. 1999. *Postmodernism Rightly Understood*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN 0-8476-9426-7

Lewis, C. S. 2001 (1944). *The Abolition of Man*. New York: Harper Collins. ISBN 0-06-065294-2

Recommended Books

Baldwin, J.F. 1998. *The Deadliest Monster*. New Braunfels, TX: Fishermen Press.

Budziszewski, J. 2003. *What We Can't Not Know*. Dallas: Spence Publishing

Colson, Charles. 1993. *How Now Shall We Live?*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Johnson, Philip. 1993. *Darwin on Trial*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

Johnson, Philip. 1995. *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books.

Kreeft, Peter and Tacelli, Ronald. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

Kuyper, Abraham. 1996. *Christianity: A Total World and Life System*. Malborough, NH: Plymouth Rock Foundation.

Neuhaus, Richard John. 1984. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Noll, Mark. 1994. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Olasky, Marvin. 1995. *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. Washington, DC: Regnery.

Schaeffer, Francis. 1982. *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*. Westchester, IL: Crossway.

Schaeffer, Francis. 1982. *How Should We Then Live?* Westchester, IL: Crossway.

Sire, James. 1997. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 3rd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

Veith, Gene Edward. 1994. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway

COURSE PROCEDURES AND ASSESSMENTS

The pedagogical structure for our course will be a modified Socratic method, meaning that **each** student will be expected to arrive at class (on time) prepared to engage in an informed, sophisticated discussion and respond to close questioning by the professor. The class will be conducted according to the principles of Christian conduct, and by the policies of Regent University. Therefore, civility, integrity, brotherly love, and respect are expected of all.

Ours will be a challenging course and maximum effort is expected of each participant. The reading load will at times be heavy, and more importantly, the subject matter will at all times be difficult, especially for those unfamiliar with political philosophy.

Requirements for this course include the following:

1. Use a **functional** (preferably Regent-issued and -supported) e-mail account for the submission of out-of-class writing assignments. "My e-mail was down," will not be an adequate excuse for late submissions.
2. Attend all class meetings. You cannot participate if you are not present, and participation is a significant portion of the course grade. If for any reason you feel you must miss a class meeting, notify the professor **BEFORE** class meets. For purposes of this course, there are no such things as "excused" or "unexcused" absences.
3. Complete all assigned readings and other designated tasks in a timely manner, in accordance with stated due-dates. Again, preparation and participation in class are a key component of your grade, and since our class format will consist of a modified Socratic method, students will be questioned directly, in class, regarding the content of the readings. Students will be subject to unannounced quizzes on current reading assignments. The frequency of the quizzes will be at the professor's discretion.
4. Write three short analysis essays of **no more than 750 words** examining the arguments of the authors and works we have read. Requirements for this essay will be published on *Blackboard*.
5. Submit an extended cultural or political analysis essay of **no more than 2500 words** examining the "worldview" assumptions implied, for example, in the work of a film director or musician, an act of public policy, the statesmanship of a political figure, the product of an author or a genre, etc. Topics must be approved by the professor in advance. Failure to submit the final paper will result in an "F" for the course, regardless of other grades. Additional requirements for this essay will be published on *Blackboard*.

All written assignments are due by 9 am on the designated due date. Late papers and assignments will be penalized 10 percentage points per 24-hour period overdue. Plagiarism and cheating of all sorts will not be tolerated (please see "Academic Honesty" below).

Students' grades will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Assessments:	Weight:
Quizzes	15%
Three Short Papers	25%
Final Paper	40%
Class Preparation and Participation	20%

We will use the following standard 4.0 grading scale:

3.80 and up	A	1.80-2.19	C
3.50-3.79	A-	1.50-1.79	C-
3.20-3.49	B+	1.20-1.49	D+
2.80-3.19	B	0.80-1.19	D
2.50-2.79	B-	0.50-0.79	D-
2.20-2.49	C+	0.49 and less	F

INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING

The Robertson School of Government seeks to restore our nation's Judeo-Christian heritage, to renew the traditional values of citizenship in the public affairs of the United States, and to promote these ideals in all the nations of the world. To that end, leadership and policy issues are rigorously analyzed from various academic perspectives in a broad, multidisciplinary endeavor, emphasizing the application of Judeo-Christian principles to theoretical and practical problems. The program is designed to produce principled graduates who are morally, spiritually, and intellectually well-grounded and who are also equipped with the practical and technological skills needed to meet today's challenges of leadership in government, policy-making, and politics.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Honesty:

The Regent University community of teachers and scholars affirms that the biblical principles of truth and honesty are absolutely essential. Indeed, the Bible contains numerous admonitions against false witnessing, dishonesty and cheating. Upholding the standard of academic integrity with its reliance on honesty is a responsibility of both faculty and students.

Conduct that violates academic integrity includes:

Dishonesty. This is lack of integrity exhibited through lying, cheating, defrauding or deceiving. Examples of dishonesty include: copying from the examination paper of another, allowing one's own examination paper to be copied, reading without the instructor's consent a copy of the examination prior to the date it is given, giving or receiving unauthorized aid on a take-home examination, use of unauthorized aids, submitting the same work product in more than one course without the permission of the instructor(s), or disclosing or accepting information if one takes a test at a different time than other students in the same course.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism as defined in the Regent University Student Handbook (2005) is "...stealing or using ideas, writings or images of another as one's own. It involves failure to acknowledge material copied from others or failure to acknowledge one's indebtedness to another for the gist of important thoughts in formal statements, written or oral" (p. 27).

Plagiarism, through ignorance, neglect, or blatant dishonesty will not be tolerated in the Robertson School of Government.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Quoting verbatim published sources without adequate documentation (See Bluebook or APA Manual for adequate documentation protocol)
2. Purchasing and/or submitting a paper already submitted by another person
3. Having someone else write the paper (i.e., friend, relative, colleague)
4. Summarizing or using the words or ideas of another without indicating that the words were another person's work.

Be forewarned that all RSG faculty have access to software that checks for plagiarism, and that I will use this software for all papers where I suspect plagiarism. Charges of violating academic integrity will be handled according to established student discipline procedures published in the Catalog and the Student Handbook.

Incomplete Grades:

An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or other extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor, and not because of neglect on the student's part. The instructor will give a regular grade if all requirements for the course are submitted by the end of the following semester. If all work is not submitted by the end of the following semester, a grade of FX will be posted automatically. The FX shall be counted as an F in the computation of the GPA.