Theology & Public Life: Terms of Cultural Engagement (2 credits)

Wednesday 7:00 PM – 10:00 p.m., February 6 – April 17, 2019

Cultural Context: Secularization, Pluralism

Feb. 6
- Bellah, Robert, “Civil Religion in America,” (ch. 9) “Religion and Legitimation of the American Republic” (ch. 10) in Robert Bellah Reader.*
- Berger, Peter L. The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. New York: Anchor Books, 1990. (pages 107-110, 127-137; NOTE: you do NOT need to read the whole PDF on Canvas, just the page numbers noted within the PDF)*

Feb. 13

Feb. 20

Writing Assignment: Summarize the characteristics of a pluralistic culture that make it challenging to present truths about the way God has made the world for human flourishing; 4-5 pages (double-spaced) due Feb. 27.

Modes of Engagement

Feb. 27

March 6
- Moschella, Melissa and Robert P. George, “Natural Law.”*
- Tollefsen, Christopher “The New Natural Law,” Lyceum, Vol. 10, No. 1, pages 1-5 (first paragraph only on p. 5) and Section 4 “Political Authority and the Political Common Good” (pages 12-15).*


**Writing Assignment:** Based on the readings, what is natural law and how does it relate to moral reasoning? From a Reformed theological perspective, how do you assess the potential and limits of the use of natural law for moral reasoning in the public square? Please answer these questions in an essay of about 3 pages (double-spaced)

**20th-Century Public Theology**

March 13

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics III-4; Selections: “The Problem of Special Ethics”* Ch. 12, section 52. (selections)*
- Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*, chapters 5-6, excerpts.*

March 20—no class (reading week)

March 27

- Hauerwas, Stanley, “On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological” and “A Retrospective Assessment of an ‘Ethics of Character’” in *The Hauerwas Reader; With the Grain of the Universe; The Value of Destiny* (Gifford Lectures), (excerpts)*

April 3

  [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)
- Smith, James K.A. *How Not To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (chapter 5)

**Writing assignment:** Observations on authors’ perspectives on the use of reason and revelation, 4-5 pages (double-spaced), due April 10.
Worldview Dynamics in Public Policy Debates

April 10

  - They Can Only Go So Far, Francis Fukuyama, *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2008*

April 17

- Manhattan Declaration*
- *Naked Public Square* 20th anniversary First Things collection (excerpt)*
- Select articles regarding effective compassion debate*

*Writing Assignment:* Final Capstone Paper due May 2 (*Integrating themes of class based on lectures, readings, and discussion*)

*Copy will be posted on course home page.*

*Grading*

- Writing Assignments (55%)
- Reading report (25%): students will turn in a reading report that states the percentage of assigned readings that they have read with reasonable care by the last day of class.
- Class Participation & Discussion Contributions (20%)