

PLS 493--Seminar in Advanced Political Philosophy
"Religion in the Public Square"

Prof. Gill, Bradley 426D
Fall, 2008

Office Hours:

MTWThF 8:15 – 9

MW 10-11:15

F 10-10:30

Those who pay even minimal attention to politics and public affairs have noticed that citizens and interest groups now attend much more than previously to religious issues and the attitudes towards them of candidates for political office. They want their candidates to profess some sort of religious faith and are interested in how this faith may affect candidates' positions on various issues. Controversy has erupted over the positions taken by clergy supportive of both presumptive presidential candidates this fall, with some citizens seeming to blame the candidates for the views of these clergypersons. Moreover, surveys have shown that the electorate is less likely to elect a professed atheist as president than an openly gay or lesbian candidate. Finally, the Supreme Court is frequently confronted with cases that involve weighing arguments to determine the proper place for the traditional line between church and state, often with some accommodation. Overall, this is an opportune time to consider the proper relationship between religion and public life in a number of different issue areas, including some comparative material about other nations.

To this end, we shall be reading six books (only one much over 250 pages and two under 200) over the course of the semester. We shall begin with Noah Feldman's *Divided by God*, an interesting overview of church/state conflict in the United States with some suggestions about settling current controversies. We will next proceed to Jeff Spinner-Halev's *Surviving Diversity*, which addresses the accommodation of various religious and cultural groups who may differ from mainstream opinions and beliefs. Next will be Jan Feldman's *Lubavitchers as Citizens*, an interesting book about an orthodox Jewish group that attempts to live as a self-contained community but whose leaders take definite political positions that they encourage members to support. Then we shall discuss Kent Greenawalt's *Does God Belong in Public Schools?*, which addresses a wide range of issues from prayer to intelligent design to meetings by student religious groups. In Elisabeth Galeotti's *Toleration as Recognition*, we shall address some comparative material relating to identity politics—that is, to circumstances both here and in Europe where citizens regard their particular religious and/or cultural identities as their defining characteristics, and to how the state should relate to these characteristics. Finally, in Stephen Mazie's *Israel's Higher Law: Religion and Liberal Democracy in the Jewish State*, we shall consider a nation state that has no established religion but allows religious authorities to control certain rites of passage, such as marriage, and discuss what lessons this might hold for the United States.

Class will consist primarily of discussion of issues central to the course material. Since this class is a seminar, the quality of class discussion will depend heavily on careful reading of the assignments before class. Students are expected to have read and reflected upon the material and to be ready to discuss in depth the issues raised by it. Students will take turns leading discussion on the assigned reading, doing so at least once during the semester but possibly more depending on class size. Typically, a student leading discussion on a particular night will do so for half the

class period (about 75 minutes). There will be two in-class essays tests, each covering three of the six assigned books. Finally, each student will write three critical analyses over the semester. Each will be devoted to issues of the student's choice in three of the six books. Guidelines for the critical analyses will be distributed shortly. A critical analysis of a book will ordinarily be due the first class meeting after we have finished discussing that book.

With respect to grading, each of the three critical analyses will count 15%; the class presentation(s) and general contributions together will count another 15%. The written exams will count 20% each.

Students should know that every letter grade means something definite. *C* means the student shows evidence of having read the course material and has at least attempted to participate in discussion on a regular basis, showing a basic understanding of the questions and problems considered. *D* is for those who fall below this mark. *B* goes to those who show a solid grasp of the material and its complexities. This means knowing the material and participating in class-- but also means having thought out the material and its implications. *A*, the gold standard, is reserved for those who have done all that is expected of the *B*'s and who also demonstrate an additional measure of critical incisiveness and imagination.

Over the last several years, I have experienced more instances than previously of students not turning in assigned papers on their due dates with no good reason(s) for the delay. Therefore, current policy is that in the absence of some clearly definable and documentable emergency, unless I have been notified and some prior arrangement has been made, papers will go down one full letter grade for every day they are late after the due date. That is, where on the due date the highest possible grade would be an *A*, the next day the highest possible grade would be a *B*, etc.

Some of this material may seem difficult at first, but be patient: it will become easier with time if you put in the requisite effort. All of these books are extremely interesting, and I hope that by the end of the course, you will agree that you have learned something valuable.

Calendar of Assignments

Aug. 28	No class: Prof. Gill at American Political Science Association meeting, Boston
Sept. 2	N. Feldman, Introduction & Ch. 1, 5-56 (51 pp.)
Sept. 4	N. Feldman, Ch. 2, 57-110 (53)
Sept. 9	N. Feldman, Ch. 3, 4, & 5, 111-185 (74)
Sept. 11	N. Feldman, Ch. 6, 7, 8, & Conclusion, 186-252 (66)
Sept. 16	Spinner-Halev, Ch. 1-2, 1-56 (55)
Sept. 18	S-H, Ch. 3-4, 57-108 (51)

Sept. 23	S-H, Ch. 5-6, 109-165 (56)
Sept. 25	No class: Professor Gill at American Section, International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy, Philadelphia
Sept. 30	S-H, Ch. 7-8, 166-219 (53)
Oct. 2	Jan Feldman, Ch. 1-3, 1-59 (58)
Oct. 7	J. Feldman, Ch. 4-5, 60-110 (50)
Oct. 9	J. Feldman, Ch. 6-7, 111-167 (56)
Oct. 14	Fall Break
Oct. 16	J. Feldman, Ch. 8-10, 168-196 (28)
Oct. 21	Test 1
Oct. 23	Greenawalt, Introduction & Ch. 1-2, 1-34 (33)
Oct. 28	Greenawalt, Ch. 3-7, 35-87 (52)
Oct. 30	Greenawalt, Ch. 8-11, 88-137 (49)
Nov. 4	Greenawalt, Ch. 12-15, 138-187 (49)
Nov. 6	Galeotti, Introduction & Ch. 1, 1-52 (51)
Nov. 11	Galeotti, Ch. 2-3, 53-114 (61)
Nov. 13	Galeotti, Ch. 4-5, 115-168 (53)
Nov. 18	Galeotti, Ch. 6-7 & Conclusion, 169-228 (59)
Nov. 20	Mazie, Preface, Introduction, & Ch. 1-2, ix-47 (59)
Nov. 25	Mazie, Ch. 3-4, 49-142 (93)
Nov. 27	Thanksgiving
Dec. 2	Mazie, Ch. 5-6, 145-188 (43)
Dec. 4	Mazie, Ch. 7-8, 189-233 (44)
Dec. 9	Mazie, Ch. 9-10, 235-284 (49)
Dec. 12 (Fri.)	Test 2 , 9-10:15 a.m. (during final exam period)

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