

GOVT 1101-104: Hebrew & Christian Bible in American Politics (FWS)

TUESDAY/THURSDAY 8:00-9:15AM

[Zoom meeting link](#)

Meeting ID: 996 8898 9272

Passcode: 1amdt

Instructor: Sarah B. Greenberg

Email: sbg67@cornell.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-4:00PM and by appointment (over Zoom)

Sign up for office hours: sarahbgreenberg.com/teaching

Course description:

We will explore why we so easily find religion and politics in tension, or even, in conflict, with each other in American politics. We will not take for granted that there is a separate sphere for religion and one for politics, but engage with numerous kinds of sources that trouble that distinction, including sacred texts (from Jewish and Christian tradition), works of political theory, Supreme Court cases, writings of political activists like Martin Luther King, Jr., and many more. Students will have numerous opportunities to explore their ideas and hone arguments in writing assignments including close-reading of foundational texts, pastiches, comparisons across different thinkers, and the course will include a mock trial about religious freedom and/or church-state separation issues.

Course objectives:

- Build scholarly writing abilities by growing close reading skills and build scholarly close reading abilities by enhancing writing skills
- Think analytically about complex questions relating to the role of religion in American politics (our lens will be Hebrew and Christian Bible) and become familiar with some of the core texts in this field of research
- Learn about and discuss aspects of successful academic writing such as: argumentation, structure, style, citations, evidence

Course requirements:

In our time together, we will discuss the assigned readings in detail and build on our discussions of key ideas and concepts from previous weeks. As you read, I recommend taking notes of ideas, concepts, and questions that you would like to discuss. Your interests and questions will shape our discussions in section. I highly encourage you to ask clarifying questions in section; they are great places to begin and continue our conversations.

Class time is an opportunity to interact with me as your instructor, but it is primarily dedicated time to discuss with and learn from your fellow students. Thus, it is essential that all members of our writing seminar (including myself) not only prioritize preparation, but also practice generosity, respect, and participation toward each other and to the topics/issues as presented and assigned.

Readings: All readings will be available on Canvas. I have selected specific versions of the texts we will be reading, so please do not use another version of the text, even if you have the book, as the primary version you read for class. You may supplement your reading with your own copy and bring it to class to compare translations, but the readings you work with, reference in class, and cite in your assignments must be from the versions posted on Canvas.

Please have that day's reading ready for each class meeting over Zoom. Repeated failure to do so will result in a diminution of your participation grade, as working closely with the texts is an essential component of this course and one of the course goals. I recommend printing it out first before reading so you can annotate on the paper, but one thing we will explore in this FWS is annotating skills and styles, so if that is not the best for you, I will work with you to find an annotation style that does.

Participation: Participation constitutes 25% of your overall grade for the course.

Participation will be evaluated based on your contributions to class discussion. I strongly emphasize quality over quantity of interventions. Some key things to keep in mind for participation: active listening and attentiveness to the ideas and questions of peers; bringing the assigned readings to each class and being able to reference them as needed; working closely with the texts; and, willingness to engage with unfamiliar ideas or concepts (or ones you may disagree with). If you have any questions or concerns about what section participation entails, please let me know.

Given the challenges wrought by the pandemic and online instruction, I understand that attendance at times may not be possible. Please make every effort to attend every class and to participate in the discussion. If you are unable to attend, please let me know as soon as possible given the circumstances.

Preparation: Preparation constitutes 10% of your overall grade, and reflects your ongoing commitment to getting materials, ideas, and questions ready for class. Preparation includes but is not limited to, posting Hypothes.is annotations, or other activities posted on Canvas. All activities will be posted with advance notice.

Assignments: Every assignment you submit must be written in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and full pagination. Any assignment that fails to meet any of these requirements will automatically lose three points. All citations must be in Chicago Style. There are many resources available through Cornell University Library to support your citations, but the Chicago Manual of Style is also an accessible website to guide you through citations: chicagomanualofstyle.org and is available on Canvas. *N.B. Chicago Style requires in-text citations to be footnotes, not parenthetical citations.*

You may request an extension no later than 24 hours before the deadline. I will also keep deadlines open for assignments (not peer review or "preparation activities" since they are tied to class discussion) for a grace period of 6-12 hours.

Assignments lose three points for every day they are late, however, I understand that unpredictable circumstances arise, especially now. If an assignment is close to being due and you feel that you are unable to submit a complete assignment or an assignment that represents your best work, please be in touch with me and we will figure out a solution together.

Description of assignments:

These are meant to be brief descriptions. At least two weeks before the assignment is due (except for Assignment 0), I will circulate an assignment page with greater description and anything you will need to know, i.e. a text to respond to, which readings are available to cite, etc.

Assignment 0 (1-2 pages): Closely and critically read a quotation (I will assign one) and respond to the quotation with an argument about the author’s use of language or syntax, ideas, argumentation style, or anything else you find in the text. **(For credit, not a grade.)**

Assignment 1 (3 pages): Pastiche – write your own version of a famous text in the realm of religion and politics.

Assignment 2 (5 pages): Mock trial brief or opinion, submitted after the in-class mock trial happens.

Assignment 3 (6-8 pages): Comparison essay – choose two of the readings that are different based on one criterion – religious tradition of focus, policy issue of focus, time period in which they are writing, or the style/genre of the work – and write an essay about what we can learn about the relationship between religion and politics by focusing on those areas of contention/where there are similarities despite important differences.

Assignment 4 (4-5 pages): Reflection essay and portfolio – looking back on the semester, discuss your journey with writing, emphasizing what you’ve learned, what you’ve worked the most on, and where you’d like to continue to grow. For the portfolio, revise any and all papers you’d like, and submit all papers with drafts that have received comments from me or your peers.

Peer workshop: Early in the semester, I will break up the class into groups of 3-4 students as “workshop groups.” Whenever we do peer workshops, you will read each other’s papers and provide constructive feedback. You will meet in the same group over the semester to support each other’s progress and to build smaller communities within our class. I am, however, open to rearranging groups as needed.

Grading:

Participation	25%	Assignment 3	20%
Preparation	10%	Assignment 4	10%
Assignment 1	10%	Mock trial	5%
Assignment 2	15%	Peer workshop	5%

Course Policies:

Office hours: Office hours are the time for you to ask questions about (and further discuss) the course, expectations, topics relevant to your study of the readings, and to get advice and support on your writing. There will also be times throughout the semester when I will pass around a schedule for all students to sign up and meet with me to discuss their progress. If you are unable to meet during my regular office hours, please email me to make a separate appointment. You can sign up for office hours in advance via my website, sarahbgreenberg.com/teaching.

Twice in the semester every student is required to meet with me to discuss your writing progress and to plan for an upcoming writing assignment. I will circulate a sign-up sheet in advance and the meetings will happen over a few days and overlap with office hours.

Email policy: Please feel free to email me frequently with questions, concerns, or anything else related to the course. I guarantee that I will respond to your email within 24 hours of receiving it during the week. I do not guarantee a response in time if you email me the night before an assignment is due. Please come reach out to me or talk to me in office hours or catch me before or after class if ever I am delayed in responding to you outside of the expectations listed above or without additional explanation.

I will send updates about the course via Canvas announcements. Please either set up your Canvas notifications to email you when there is a Canvas announcement for the course, or check Canvas regularly – at least once a day during the week. Please also check your Cornell email (or wherever you regularly receive your Cornell email) at least once a day so as not to miss important updates from the University.

Zoom policy: Our class will meet entirely over Zoom. I expect that you will attend each class meeting on time and ready to participate. Please have your camera on, as it allows us all to have verbal and visual cues from each other, as well as build community. If for some reason you are uncomfortable having your camera on for a particular class session, please let me know in advance, and I will certainly accommodate you. Otherwise, I expect that all students will be visually present in the classroom.

Shared expectations during class time:

- Full attention on the immediate conversation, topic, or activity of our writing seminar
- No research associated with the class, to messaging members of the class, or working on your assignments or readings unless specifically instructed to do so
- No work for other courses or completing other tasks during class time
- If there is a personal emergency that may require a change in these expectations, please be in touch so we can discuss the appropriate accommodation. I will let you know if I ever need to have an eye on my email or phone during class time

Throughout the semester, we will use breakout rooms to have small group discussions and to facilitate peer review discussions. When in your breakout rooms, I expect the same norms of respect, preparation, and generosity, as well as having cameras on. Additionally, I will be visiting breakout rooms to answer questions and to check in on each group's progress (Zoom

doesn't give you a warning before someone joins, so I wanted to let you know in advance that I will be "walking around" and checking in on the groups).

I am committed to working through Zoom to create a warm classroom-like environment for you to discuss these exciting texts and to enhance your analytical writing and reading skills. If you have any questions about how this will work or about the Zoom policy, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Academic integrity: Students are expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>), which prohibits academic dishonesty in all forms, including plagiarism, cheating, and related activity. Plagiarism is a serious offense which can result in your dismissal from the university. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another's words, ideas, and arguments as your own. *If you have any questions about how and when to cite, please contact me. It is better to cite a source than not to cite at all.* The Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity may be found in full here: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>. In addition, I strongly encourage you to visit the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, which is a great resource on campus for learning good citation and writing practices (<http://knight.as.cornell.edu>).

Statement of nondiscrimination: I am committed to a "brave spaces" classroom, in which we are all encouraged to take risks, try out ideas, and work together to piece through a text or an intellectual concern. "Brave spaces" builds off of "safe spaces" to create a learning environment where every person is welcome and that while not all language or ways of speaking are tolerated (such as discriminatory or offensive) in the classroom, we can learn from mistakes and repair inclusively. While I will work my hardest to make sure our classroom is a place where you can fully engage, we all need to be mindful of the explicit and implicit resonances of the words we use and the ways in which we speak.

This entails cultivating practices of speaking, listening, and engaging with each other across our differences, diversity of viewpoints, and disagreements. If at any time you feel you are uncomfortable with something one of your classmates has said or I have said, please be in touch with me so that we can have a conversation about it.

Accommodations: I am committed to making this course and the Zoom classroom equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all. If you need an accommodation (including an excused absence) to participate fully in the class, please be in touch with me as soon as possible.

This statement is aligned with University policy and regulations and the instructor's commitment to student well-being and inclusion. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

Student resources: These are important and **free** campus resources regarding student health and well-being (inspired by Prof. Jamila Michener's syllabus for GOVT 3032). I have also included a few campus resources of a wide range of student support.

This will be a uniquely challenging time – no one is quite habituated to the Covid-19-related regulations for this semester – and we’re all managing our academic and personal responsibilities. Please do not hesitate to seek guidance or support from the below resources or any other you may know about.

Cornell Health

607-255-5155

Includes 24/7 Crisis Counseling and Intervention

health.cornell.edu

EARS Counseling

Empathy Assistance and Referral Services

Peer-lead counseling

607-255-EARS

<http://orgsync.rso.cornell.edu/org/ears>

Let's Talk

Drop-in professional consultation

607-255-5155 (ext. 2)

<https://health.cornell.edu/services/counseling-psychiatry/lets-talk>

Caring Community

One-stop website for a range of mental, physical, emotional health resources at Cornell and in the Ithaca community

<https://caringcommunity.cornell.edu/get-help/>

Student Disability Services

Student Disability Services works in partnership with Cornell faculty, staff, and students to ensure that all aspects of student life are accessible, equitable, and inclusive of individuals with disabilities

<https://sds.cornell.edu>

Office of the Student Advocate

Helps undergraduates navigate Cornell bureaucracy

<https://www.cornellstudentadvocate.com>

University Ombudsman

The ombudsman helps members of the Cornell community manage concerns and conflicts

<https://www.ombudsman.cornell.edu>

Office of Institutional Equity and Title IX

Reporting and support for sexual or related misconduct

<https://titleix.cornell.edu>

The Knight Institute's Writing Workshop

Provides diverse types of writing support for students and faculty, including writing assessment, coursework, and tutoring

<https://knight.as.cornell.edu/writing-workshop>

Student and Campus Life Offices

these are all distinct offices with unique missions and communities of focus, but since they can all be found on the same webpage connected to the Office of the Dean of Students, I thought it might be easier to list them this way, so you can find multiple offices or centers of interest at once

Women's Resource Center; First Generation & Low Income Support; LGBT Resource Center, Undocumented & DACA Support; Office of Spirituality and Meaning Making; Asian & Asian American Center; Multicultural Student Leadership and Empowerment; Diversity and Equity Resources

<https://scl.cornell.edu/identity-resources>

Course schedule:

Opening the Course and Questioning the Beginning

September 3: Syllabus review, what is (Hebrew) (Christian) Bible? what is (American) politics?

September 8: The Puritanical Heritage

Reading: Selections from John Winthrop's "City upon a Hill" sermon

Lockean Legacies

September 10: Locke, Genesis, and social contract

Reading: *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (§§1-8, 25-28, 30-43, 49, 87-90, 120-122) and Genesis 1-3 (NJPS translation)

September 11: Assignment 0 due at 9AM via Canvas

September 15: How Lockean are we?

Reading: Declaration of Independence and Chapter 1.I of *On Revolution*, homework:

Hypothesis annotation

Biblical Sovereignty

September 16: Assignment 1 available on Canvas

September 17: A Civil, Religious Sovereign

Reading: *Leviathan* (look carefully at the frontispiece, Chapters XIII-XV.16, XVI-XVII),

homework: *They Say, I Say* worksheet

September 22: Kingdom of God?

Reading: *Leviathan* (Chapter XXXV)¹ and 1 Samuel 8 (NJPS translation)

September 22-24: Individual conferences (sign-up sheet to be circulated beforehand)

Religious or Political Action?

September 24: *b'tzelem Elohim*

Reading: Heschel's "Religion and Race" essay and Exodus 7-13 (NJPS translation), revisit Genesis 1

September 27: First draft of Assignment 1 due by 9AM via Feedback Fruits

September 29: Assignment 1 Workshop

Reading: Your workshop group's papers and post comments on Feedback Fruits by 11:59 on September 28

¹ I will provide you with a guide for all the scriptural citations in this chapter.

October 1: *imago Dei*

Reading: King's "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail" essay and Matthew 5 (NSRV)

October 2: Assignment 1 due at 9AM via Canvas

Bible at the Supreme Court

October 6: What are the biblical arguments around reproductive rights? (1)

Reading: selections from *Roe v. Wade* (1973), Exodus 21 (NJPS translation), [explore the links on this Pew Research article about different faith groups' perspectives on access to abortion](#)

October 7: Assignment 2 available on Canvas, including student groups (lawyers or justices)

October 8: What are the biblical arguments around reproductive rights? (2)

Reading: selections from *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014)

October 12: ***First draft of Assignment 2 due by 9:00AM via Feedback Fruits***

October 13: What are the biblical arguments around LGBTQ rights?

Reading: selections from *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (2017), Leviticus 19

October 15: Assignment 2 Workshop

Reading: Your workshop group's papers and post comments via Feedback Fruits by 11:59pm on October 14

MOCK TRIAL!

October 20: IN-CLASS MOCK TRIAL

October 22: Library visit

October 26: Assignment 2 due at 9am via Canvas

October 27: Thinking about how the state punishes

Reading: Watch interview with Sister Helen Prejean, excerpt from Catholic Catechism

October 29: Religious advocates

Reading: [Chai-Powered Lobbyist](#) (RAC.org); [BJC "Freedom Fighters" video](#); ["A Theological Perspective on Quaker Lobbying"](#); [CLS devotional "Why Your Work Matters"](#); OU [Federal and State Advocacy and video](#)

Direct Action

November 1: Assignment 3 available on Canvas

November 3: Conscientious Objection

Reading: Selections from Thoreau's essay "Resistance to Civil Government"

November 5: Civil Disobedience

Reading: Selections from *On Civil Disobedience*

November 6-8: Individual conferences during office hours (sign-up sheet to be circulated)

November 8: First draft of Assignment 3 due at 9AM via Feedback Fruits

Presidential bible

November 10: Questions from the twentieth century

Reading: Selections from: Kennedy's 1960 separation of church and state speech, Reagan's "City on a Hill" speech, supplemental article

November 12: Questions from the twenty-first century

Reading: Selections from: Bush speeches on religion post 9/11, Obama's Moses and Joshua generation speech, supplemental article, review of one peer's draft of assignment 3

November 13: Assignment 3 due at 9AM via Canvas

Religion's Critics

November 23: Assignment 4 available on Canvas

December 1: Secularism

Reading: Selections from *Formations of the Secular*

December 3: Atheism

Reading: Selections from *God is Not Great*, homework: *They Say, I Say* worksheet

Closing and Takeaways

December 8: Religion and Politics Scavenger Hunt (posted on December 2 at 12PM on Canvas (part of participation and preparation grade)

December 10: The state of play today

Reading: Workshop group articles²

December 15: Does (Hebrew) (Christian) Bible have a place in American politics?

Reading: TBD

December 18: Assignment 4 due at 12pm via Canvas

² Everyone in your workshop group will select one news article or opinion piece, and you will all read each other's selections in your small group. For part of class, you will discuss what you read, and then share with the class.