Fall 2000

PLST 312: Contemporary Political Ideologies

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Dordt College

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Instructor: Dr. F. Van Geest  
Classroom: C108  
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Course Overview

This course explores some of the great issues and debates today concerning how we organize our societies and what relationships ought to exist between citizens and the state. What is the purpose of the state? What is the best means of achieving social justice? Why is democratic rule preferred over authoritarian rule? In the last couple of centuries, various ideologies or integrated, coherent systems of beliefs and ideas have been formulated in an effort to provide answers to these and other related 'big' questions. This course will evaluate the extent to which these various ideologies are consistent with, or can contribute to a Biblical perspective on these great issues.

Course Objectives

The course has several objectives. First, it aims to provide the student with an understanding of the answers that people committed to various ideologies have given to these great questions. Second, the course will identify the various positions or political ideologies that Christians hold on these questions and examine the relationship to the traditional and contemporary secular ideologies. Third, meeting the above two objectives will assist in helping the student to develop an informed, well reasoned, consistent, biblical positions on the great issues for him or herself. Fourth, the course will help students understand the enormous practical influence of these various political ideologies. In particular, we will see how political ideologies directly influence public policies and are responsible for massive social change. Finally, the course has the objective of enabling students to better understand the history of the last two centuries by seeing how political ideologies have fundamentally shaped and determined the course of that history.

Required books


Available on reserve:


COURSE OUTLINE

* All readings preceded by an asterisk are required readings. All other readings are recommended.

I. Introduction to Ideology

* Great Ideas, chap. 1

Ideological Voices,
- * Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", p.409-417
- Judith Shklar, "Political Theory and Ideology" p.4-14
* "Basic Affirmations of the Center for Public Justice" (handout available from instructor)
* Citizens for Public Justice, "Guidelines for Christian Political Service and Charter of Social Rights and Responsibilities"
* "Whose society, whose best interests" (handout available from instructor)

II. Classical Liberalism

*Great Ideas, chap 2

Ideological Voices,

- National Assembly of France, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens"

- Robert Nozick, "A Libertarian Conception of Distributive Justice"

- * John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty", section "Introductory"

- Adam Smith, "The Wealth of Nations"

III. Traditional Conservatism

*Great Ideas, chap 3

Ideological Voices,

- * Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France"
- Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Constituents of Bristol"
* Nelan, Bruce W., "Does Germany Have Something Against These Guys?", *Time*, February 10, 1997. (article to be provided by instructor)

*The Scattered Voice*, "The Roots of Ambivalence and Conflict"

**IV. Marxism**

*Great Ideas*, chap. 5

*Ideological Voices*,
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party"
- Robert C. Tucker, "Marx and Distributive Justice"
- Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844"
- Friedrich, Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific"


**V. Communism**

*Great Ideas*, chap. 6

*Ideological Voices*,
- Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), Selected Writings, p.155-166
- Mao Zedong, Selected Writings, p.166-171
- Other selected writings, p. 172-180

**VI. Fascism and Nazism**

*Great Ideas*, chap. 6

*Ideological Voices*
- Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism"
- *Aryan Nations: The Creed of the White Christian Nations"
- Adolf Hitler, "Mein Kampf"
- Other selected writings on Aryanism, p. 203-209

**VII. Contemporary Liberalism**

*Great Ideas*, chap. 8

*Ideological Voices*
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- John Rawls, "A Kantian Conception of Equality"
- Mickey Kaus, "For a New Equality"
- John Dewey, "Freedom and Culture"

* Chadwick Ray, "What Do the Poor Deserve", handout available from instructor
The Scattered Voice,
- * Traditional and Reflective Liberals
- * Civil Rights Reformers"


VIII. Democratic Socialism

* Great Ideas, chap. 9

Ideological Voices
- * Eduard Bernstein, "Evolutionary Socialism
- * Michael Walzer, "Justice Here and Now"
- Carole Pateman, "A Participatory Theory of Democracy"
- Michael Harrington, "Corporate Collectivism"

-*"The Future of Welfare Reform: Issues of Justice and Love" and other related handouts made available by instructor

IX. Contemporary Conservatism

* Great Ideas, chap. 10

Ideological Voices
- * Irving Kristol, "A Capitalist Conception of Justice"
- * George Gilder, "The Moral Hazards of Liberalism"
- Samuel Huntington, "The Democratic Distemper"
- Thomas Sowell, "Preferential Policies"

X. Christian Conservatives

The Scattered Voice,
- * "Pro-American Conservatives"
- * "Cautious and Critical Conservatives"
- * "Sophisticated Neo-Conservatives"


- Scan the Christian Coalition website, read section on "About the Coalition" more closely. 
http://www.cc.org/
XI. Fundamentalism

* Great Ideas, chap. 11

Ideological Voices
- Jerry Falwell, "Fundamentalism Is Alive and Well"
- Khomeini, "Islamic Government"
- Rabbi Meir Kahane, "Uncomfortable Questions for Comfortable Jews"

XII. Environmentalism

* Great Ideas, chap. 12

Ideological Voices
- Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic"
- Petra Kelly, "Creating an Ecological Economy"
- Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"
- The Guiding Principles of the European Federation of Green Parties
  http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/oterhaar/greens/europe/princips.htm

- Dan Markhham, "An Evangelical In Environmental Sheep's Clothing", Target Earth, May/June, 1997. (Available from instructor)


XIII. Feminism

* Great Ideas, chap. 12

Ideological Voices
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Seneca Falls Declaration"
- Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint"
- Carol Gilligan, "In a Different Voice"
- Susan Moller Okin, "Justice, Gender and the Family"


Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos, Reformed and Feminist: A Challenge to the Church, Louisville, Kentucky:

**XIV. Other Christian Political Ideologies**

*The Scattered Voice,*
- *"Pro-Justice Activists"
- *"Theonomic Reconstructionists"
- *"From Contention to Communication"
- *"Is There Hope for the Future"

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**Evaluation**

Evaluation will be composed of a) thirteen written assignments & presentations and b) class participation. The written assignments are explained below. The participation grade will be based on contributions to class discussion and the effort directed at engaging peers over their written work. There will be no written examinations in this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit Essays</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluations</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Assignments**

In this course, our main task is to *evaluate* each of the various political ideologies presented in the readings from a Christian perspective. Ideologies can be evaluated in terms of their "undesirable characteristics" as explained on p.10-11 of the text as well as their "positive characteristics" (p.38-39). Accordingly,

- each student will write four essays (approximately 2000 words each) on different ideologies using the statements on p. 10-11 or 38-39 as a **guide**. The ideology must be evaluated from a Christian perspective.
- The essay will be electronically distributed to each member of the class no later than 24 hours before the class.
- This analysis will then be given in a short presentation (about 5-10 minutes) to the class on the day that particular ideology is being considered. In this presentation, you may give a brief overview of your paper (it should not be read from a script--assume that everybody has read your paper), your frustrations and joys in writing it, why you focussed on what you did and left other things out, remaining questions you have, and so on. Use this time to do what you could not do in your paper.
• Each student will be expected to come to class prepared to informally evaluate the analysis given in the other essays & presentations and by doing so, demonstrate to the instructor that they have thoughtfully considered the analysis of their peers. The general class participation grade will be arrived at by consideration of the following criteria:

• attendance,
• adequate preparation for class
• courtesy to instructor and other students,
• the extent to which the student seeks help outside of class when necessary,
• participation in class discussion,
• the extent to which the student takes responsibility for his/her own learning
• insightful and sensitive contributions to class

In addition, the following assignments are structured to facilitate learning objectives:

**Peer review.** Each student must submit by email a total of eight peer evaluations, on ideologies not covered by other assignments. In the peer evaluation, each student will be expected to evaluate the analysis given in the essays & presentations (and by doing so, demonstrate to the instructor that s/he has thoughtfully considered the material). Class discussion of the presented essays should be of help in writing up these evaluations. This peer evaluation should be submitted no later than one day after the presentation.

**Final essay.** You must submit a final integrative essay in which you explain how the study of ideologies has affected the development of your own Christian worldview, both in terms of its substance and the process by which it has and is developing. The length and style should be similar to the other papers you write for this course. It is to be submitted to the professor no later than 24 hours after the last class of the semester (those students presenting on the last unit may submit the final essay up to 48 hours after the last class of the semester).

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**Political Science 312, Presentation/Essay Evaluations**
(form to be distributed by email)

**Directions:** Please answer questions #1 to #7 in terms of the substance or content of the presentation/essay. Any comment on presentation and essay style or organization should be reserved for questions # 8 and #9.
One short paragraph should be adequate in answering most questions. Please answer these questions using complete sentences and good written form. This evaluation will be used to a) help evaluate your peers, b) help you articulate and form thoughts on the material, and c) to judge your understanding of the material and contribute to your participation grade. Please submit this complete evaluation to me, by email (vangeest@dordt.edu), no later than 24 hours after the presentation has been given in class. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. How well are issues on pp.10-11 or pp.38-39 addressed?

2. Do you agree with the presenter's assessment of the ideology and why or why not?

3. How well does the presenter seem to understand the ideology?

4. Are there any aspects of the readings you felt the presenter should have addressed, but did not?

5. How well did the presenter assess the ideology from a Biblical perspective? Would you agree or disagree with this analysis?

6. What were the main strengths of the presentation and essay?

7. What were the main weaknesses of the presentation and essay?

8. How do you evaluate the organization and style of the presentation?

9. How do you evaluate the organization and style of the essay?

10. What letter grade you would give this presentation?

1. The term "positive" is used by Schumaker et. al. here in a functional sense, i.e. Nazism may have "positive" qualities in the sense that it functions well as an ideology that addresses important issues, influences people to action, interprets existing socio-economic conditions, etc. Thus, using Schumaker's framework, it is possible to argue that Nazism has positive qualities, as an ideology, i.e. it does the things an ideology is 'supposed' to do. However, thinking about the "positive" aspects of the ideas inherent in Nazism requires a different level of evaluation, an evaluation of the ideas themselves, not their function. Your reviews should attempt to encompass both types of evaluation.