

# Political Theology

## RLGS 3452

---

Carl A. Raschke | Department of Religious Studies | Sturm Hall 266 | University of Denver | Denver CO 80208

Email: [craschke@du.edu](mailto:craschke@du.edu) | [carlraschke@gmail.com](mailto:carlraschke@gmail.com)

Tel. 303 871-3117 | FAX: 720 235-0217

Office Hours: T 1:30- 4:30 Sturm Hall 266

PLEASE READ THIS SYLLABUS VERY CAREFULLY! It is your contract with the instructor.



### Summary

The course will investigate the relationship between political theory and the varieties of religious and theological thinking with a special focus on current Continental philosophy and contemporary European thought. Rather than constituting a general survey, the course will single out certain themes such as the nature and understanding of “political theology”, concept of the political, the origins of modern liberal thought, the problem of sovereignty, and the impact of globalization.

All students need to have signed up for Blackboard by the second week of class. The online version of this course can be found on Blackboard.

## Texts

Title	Author	Publisher	Date of Publication	ISBN	Hardback/Paperback
<i>Kant's Political Writings</i>	Immanuel Kant	Cambridge University Press	1991	10: 0521398371	P
<i>Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty</i>	Carl Schmidt	University of Chicago Press	2006	10: 0226738892	P
<i>Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning &amp; the New International</i>	Jacques Derrida	Routledge	2006	10: 0415389577	P
<i>Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life</i>	Giorgio Agamben	Stanford University Press	1998	10: 0804732183	P
<i>The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West</i>	Mark Lilla	Vintage Books	2008	10: 1400079136	P

*Handouts for other assignments will be distributed as needed.*

## Outline and Readings

**Week 1.** Introduction. What is political theology? The growing importance and current ambivalence of the term. The “impossibility” of the secular. Read handout by Claude Lefort on “The Permanence of the Theologico-Political.”.

**Week 2.** The Christian theological roots of liberal democracy. Read Lilla, *The Stillborn God*.

**Week 3.** The philosophical and theological background of modern liberal political theory I. Read Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose”, “An Answer to the Question, ‘What is Enlightenment?’”

**Week 4.** . The philosophical and theological background of modern liberal political theory II. Read Kant, “Introduction to the Theory of Right”, “The Theory of Right, Part II?”, “A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question, ‘Is the Human Race Constantly Improving?’”

**Week 5.** Anti-liberalism and post-liberal reformulations of the concept of “sovereignty.” . Read Schmidt, *Political Theology*.

**Week 6.**

**Week 7.** Post-liberal reformulations of the “political”. Read Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

**Week 8.** Postmodernism, deconstruction, and the “political theology” of the messianic. Read Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*.

**Week 9.** Globalization and the problem of sovereignty I. From the “economic” to the “theopolitical.” Read excerpts from Carl Raschke’s forthcoming book *Force of God: Political Theology and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*. To be handed out in class.

**Week 10.** Globalization and the problem of sovereignty II. From the “economic” to the “theopolitical.” Read excerpts from Carl Raschke’s forthcoming book *Force of God: Political Theology and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*.

## Assignments

■ **Reading groups.** Each student will be assigned to a reading group of no less than 3 and no more than 5. Reading groups will meet at least an hour a week outside of regular class time. Reading group participation on a weekly basis is required of all students and will be graded. Reading groups themselves will determine who is responsible for individual tasks. But, generally speaking, the groups will routinely: (1) carefully summarize and review the assigned readings for each week (2) do additional readings within the assigned texts or readings and related materials not assigned for the class (3) develop a set of specific questions each week to pose to the class, the instructors, or other members of the reading group during plenary meetings or on Blackboard.

■ **Research paper.** A research paper of no less than 12 pages for undergraduates, 15 pages for masters-level students, and 20 pages for those at the doctoral-level . The paper must carefully work not only with the assigned texts for the course, but several additional texts not assigned. Students must submit a one-or-two-paragraph proposal *by email* no to the instructor no later than February 5 with the following information: 1) proposed title of the paper 2) brief description of the scope and aims of the paper 3) short bibliography.

*Blackboard postings:* Students will then post these proposals on Blackboard no later than February 6 and participate in a discussion forum in which they respond to and critique each

other's papers. Students will then post by reading group and expected to respond to *all* the proposals in *one other* group. The specific interactions and respondents will be determined after it is known how many groups there are and who is in what group.

- **Take-home final examination** (to be distributed the last week of class).

## Incompletes

Since the fall of 2005, the University of Denver has had a new and very strict, federally mandated incomplete policy. Instructors are not allowed to make exceptions to this policy. Students must now make formal application for incompletes, and only under certain circumstances will these requests be granted.

Acceptable reasons for granting incompletes or extensions are at least one of the following: (1) Medical emergency (2) Personal emergency, such as death or trauma in the family (3) Inability to acquire key research resources. The desire to have more time to write a better paper, or poor time management on the student's part, is no longer a viable excuse from the university's perspective.

**NOTE!!! THIS POLICY IS ENFORCED FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS REGISTERED IN THE JOINT PHD PROGRAM AS WELL AS DU STUDENTS.**

Under new university policy assignments that are not turned in by the due date without authorization of an extension – or granting an incomplete in advance - will be given an automatic F. If a student is given an F, it is up to him or her to prove that the assignment was in fact turned in on time, or that an extension was granted. Students should always keep up back up copies of assignments, whether in hard copy or electronic form, as well as the emails containing the assignments along with the dates sent.

DU's complete policy can be found on the web at <http://www.du.edu/registrar/records/incompletepolicy.html>.

The incomplete application can be downloaded at [http://www.du.edu/registrar/forms/Incomplete\\_application.doc](http://www.du.edu/registrar/forms/Incomplete_application.doc).

## Due Dates

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY. YOU IGNORE THIS INFORMATION AT YOUR OWN PERIL! THE EXCUSE "I DIDN'T KNOW THE POLICIES" AT THE END OF THE QUARTER WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

The research paper is due no later than Friday, March 15 at 11:00 p.m.

Research papers turned in after that deadline will not be accepted unless the student has requested, and received, in writing via email (prior to March 12) a request for an extension. The absolutely latest the paper can be turned in will be Saturday, March 16 at 5 p.m.

Final examinations *must under all circumstances* be turned in by Thursday March 14 at 10 p.m. Incompletes are subject to the university's new, strict policy and will be given only in case of medical emergency or death in the family. Students must fill out and submit an incomplete application prior to the end of the term. Incompletes for any reason must be made up by the end of the following quarter. Requests for incompletes must be made by sending an email to BOTH OF THE ABOVE EMAIL ADDRESSES. Oral requests are not acceptable.

METHOD OF TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS: Assignments **MUST** be turned in by email. Assignments *under no circumstances* are to be given to the department assistant, to another student, another faculty member, or left under the department door.

NOTE: It is your responsibility, not the instructor's, to make sure that assignments are turned in properly and on time. The instructor assumes no liability if the assignments are not turned in properly and according to the protocols stated above.

## **Grading**

The grade will be distributed as follows: reading groups and participation (20%), research paper (40%), final examination (40%).