Course Description

Authorities are necessary in any society. Authoritative decisions must be made about when to wage war and when to pursue peace; about what will receive public support and what will be banned; about who gets what, when, and how. Yet authorities in the modern era have found it increasingly difficult to justify their decisions, or even their very offices, in the face of increasingly skeptical and diverse publics. Much of this difficulty reflects a “crisis of values,”—a rejection by many of traditional beliefs about what is good and sacred, together with an inability of political leaders or philosophers to find alternative ends or procedures that command universal assent and that could be appealed to by authorities to guide and justify their decisions. This course explores the breakdown of traditional political values, the attempts to reconstruct authority on new foundations, and the ongoing challenges to these reconstructions.

Week 1  Introduction
Session 1: Read and discuss David Brooks, “The Broken Society.” Discuss kinds of authority and kinds of values. Weber on legitimation. Can political power still be legitimated?
Session 2: Before hierarchy and power: the hunter-gatherers
   * Mini-lecture on distributive and collective power, on social caging, on the hydraulic agriculture thesis

Week 2  From Mytho-poetic to Metaphysical justifications of authority
Session 1: The God-Kings of Egypt
   * Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 3-36 (that is, through the first page of ch. 3); 51- mid63; 68-69; and mid77-78.
   * presentation on Christ-King (Kantorowicz)
Session 2: Legitimizing a social hierarchy: everyone their proper role
   * Plato, *The Republic* (selections)

Week 3  The Politics of the Good
Session 1: MLK Day (no class)
Session 2: Creating the Good Man
* Aristotle, *Ethics* (selections)
* Aristotle, *Politics* (selections)
* Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia* (the yeoman farmer)

**Week 4** The Politics of God
Session 1: The Sacred Foundings of Rome
  * Arendt, “What is Authority?”
Session 2: * Shmuel Eisenstadt, “The Axial Age: the emergence of transcendental visions and the rise of clerics”

**Week 5** The Politics of God, continued
Session 1: Creator monotheism and its consequences for values and authority
  **Midterm exam**
  * Oakley, *The Medieval Experience*, 108-115
  * The Pope’s Spiritual Authority
  * The Emperor’s Temporal Authority
  * Ciepley on background to the Protestant Reformation
  * Martin Luther (Oberman selections)
Session 2: From spiritual individualism to religious and political individualism
  * Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, “A Due Form of Government”

**Week 6** Founding the Agency Society
Session 1: * Winthrop, “Speech Aboard the Arbella”
  * Winthrop, “Court Speech”
  * Cotton, “The Limitation of Government”
  * “Massachusetts Body of Liberties, 1641” (selections: pages 70 - top of 71; and the following articles: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 26, 29, 36, 42, 45, 46, 47, 58, 59, 60, 67, 68, 70, 80, 83, 92, 94.1, 95.1, 95.3, 95.4, 95.5, 96, 97, 98. This sounds like a lot of selections, but they only come to around 6 pages)
Session 2: Natural Law Liberalism as Reinterpretation of the Agency Society
  * *Declaration of Independence*, first two paragraphs and last three paragraphs. Browse some of the grievances in between

**Week 7** More on liberalism; Modern Science and The Critique of the Metaphysics of the Good
Session 1: * Review Locke on Paternal Power
  * Block, *A Nation of Agents*, “John Locke and the Mythic Society of Free Agents”
Session 2: The eclipse of Greek teleology and its concepts of Nature and the Good
  * Oakley, “God, Philosophy, and Science,” 156-170
  * Shapin, 15-top37, 46-top49, top52-55, bottom57-58, top61-64 (33pp)

**Week 8** Doing without God and the Good: The “liberalism” of fear and the liberalism of desire
Session 1: * lecture on the marginalization of the Bible
   * Hobbes (selections)
Session 2: * Hume, *Treatise*, 456bottom-458; 469bottom half - 472; *Enquiry*, bottom73-top74; *Treatise*, 484-top496; 500-501; *Enquiry*, bottom81-mid82; *Treatise*, 526; 534-top539 [29pp total]
   * Durkheim on precontractual conditions of contract? (TBA?)

**Week 9** Problems with the remaining bases of authority: interest, property and democracy
Session 1: Failure of the “Enlightenment Project”
   * MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 36-78
Session 2: Do we really have a private property economy?
   * Ciepley, “Beyond Public and Private: Toward a Political Theory of the Corporation”

**Week 10**
Session 1: Democracy without Values: The Rise of Interest Group Pluralism
   * Ciepley, *Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism*, 183-228
Session 2: Our Crisis of Authority and Values
   * TBA

Monday, 10 a.m., final paper due in my mailbox, Sturm 466
Course Requirements and Grading

Course credit will be based on class participation, papers, cooperative learning assignments, quizzes, and occasional reading notes and outlines. I reserve the right to adjust the assignments as we proceed. In calculating your grade, the various components of this course will be weighed in roughly the following proportions: 35% paper, 25% midterm, 20% class participation, 10% cooperative learning assignments, 10% notes, outlines, and quizzes.

Participation: Class time will be devoted primarily to discussion of the readings, sometimes in a small group setting, and sometimes with the full class. It makes no sense to come to class if you haven’t done the readings: you will get very little out of the discussion, and others will get nothing out of you. You do not get credit for showing up; you get credit for speaking up. On the other hand, the classroom is not a competitive arena. If you make one reasonably thoughtful comment in our full-class discussions on a given day, you get full credit for the day. Come with a question or comment in mind. Also, I’ll occasionally ask a “no-brainer” question. If you’ve nothing else to say for the day, or are simply shy, at least take advantage of these. We’ll all thank you for it, as it will help us keep discussion at a steady pace. Above all, be sensitive to the classroom dynamic, for which we are all responsible. Don’t take over the discussion; disagree respectfully; keep your comments on topic; try to refer to your classmates by name when referencing a point they have made (this helps keep things civil—reminding us that there is a person behind every opinion).

Paper: The paper will be divided into a style component (worth one third) and a content component (worth two thirds).

Extension policy: Paper due dates are announced, and paper topics handed out, well in advance of the deadline. If you budget your time and start your paper early, you should have no trouble getting your paper in on time, even if you fall ill. There are no deadline extensions in this course, with exception made only for (documented) hospitalization or death in one’s immediate family. There are no extensions for illness, extracurricular activities, other schoolwork, or anything else. However, I do accept late papers, at a penalty of one-third of a letter grade for each day late, beginning one minute after the deadline.

Notes, outlines, and quizzes: I will occasionally ask you to submit notes or outlines on a reading, usually because I judge the reading to be particularly tricky or to require the connecting of some dots. Notes should be one or two pages long, no longer. Good notes record questions and insights you have and connections you make. There will also be occasional quizzes. If everyone continues to do the reading and discussions remain lively, fewer quizzes will be administered.