

RSCE 3048: Church, Power, Justice
Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
MTh @ 9:40-11am, CDSP 113
Spring 2006

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Office Hours: Thursdays @ 1-3pm; if this time slot does not fit your schedule, please feel free call for an appointment since I'm at school most weekdays; note also that Allison Tanner is available for office hours by appointment.

Course Description: Reminiscent of the observation Alexis de Tocqueville made 160 years ago that religion in one of America's foremost "political institutions," this course focuses on the extent to which churches function as important loci for public discourse and mass mobilization in efforts to dismantle the power relations that undermine the realization of a truly just and egalitarian society. After introducing students to the central theoretical frameworks for understanding how these forms of social power become reproduced in society, the course will address the manner and extent to which religious institutions have helped provide the ideological and organization resources necessary to challenge these forms of power and, in the process, promote social justice. A combination of theory and practical application, this course is designed to address the concerns of students interested in sociology of religion as well as those preparing for ministry.

Required Texts:

Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America? Power, Politics and Social Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Ann Arnett Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

Christel Manning, *God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

Dawne Moon, *God, Sex and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Richard L. Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

*There will also be a reader available for purchase at Copy Central on 2483 Hearst Avenue; selections from this reader are listed in the course schedule and identified with an asterisk.

Course Structure: For each week, we intend to present material on Mondays while Thursdays will be principally devoted to both student-led class discussion and guest panelists.

Course Requirements:

1. Classroom preparation, attendance and participation. Rather than this being construed as the instructors' class, I'm asking that you contribute to making this *our* class by keeping abreast of the readings and sharing your insights on a regular basis (15%).
2. Facilitation of one class discussion. This basically involves four things: a. sign up for a week for which the topic or readings are particularly interesting to you; b. coordinate your paper / presentation with the other student(s) signed up for your day; c. write a one-page critical reflection on part or all of that week's reading (along with one or two incisive discussion questions) and make enough copies of it for everyone in the class; d. present your paper to the class on Thursday of that week and facilitate the group discussion of your questions (15%).
3. Two Position Papers: As delineated in the course schedule below, this course is divided into four sections. Students are to select the first and any one other section, write a 3-5-page position paper in response to the corresponding set of questions for that section and submit it on the date specified (40%).
4. An Integration Paper: This paper, which should be 7-10 pages in length, is intended to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and actually use some of the more salient analytical concepts introduced throughout this course by attending to a concrete issue of the students' own choosing. Specifically, this paper should be comprised of the following four parts:
 - a. Description: Describe some specific issue concerning conflict and/or injustice with which you are either already familiar (through reading, past experience, ministerial work, etc.) or have done some modest investigation.
 - b. Power: With explicit reference to concepts and analysis derived from appropriate texts covered in this course, explain the manner in which power is being wielded within the context of your selected issue.

- c. Church: Again with explicit reference to concepts and analysis derived from appropriate texts covered in this course, examine the way(s) in which the religious institutions, ideas and/or publics are operative in resisting and/or perpetuating the problematic issue you have selected.
 - d. Toward Greater Justice: In this final section, delineate the ways in which this issue and your analysis of it might inform your own action in the world with respect to your future ministry, scholarship and/or life choices.
- NB: This paper is due in Jerome Baggett's JSTB box by noon on Friday, May 19 (30%).

Course Schedule:

I. Two Dimensions of Power:

Week 1 (Jan. 30 & Feb. 2): Power and Domination in American Politics
Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*, chapters 1 and 2

Week 2 (Feb. 6 & 9): Power and Domination in American Politics (cont.)
Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*, chapters 5-8.

Week 3 (Feb. 13 & 16): Power and Subjectivity in the Carceral Society
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part One, chapters 1-2, Part Two, chapter 1.

Week 4 (Feb. 23): Power and Subjectivity in the Carceral Society (cont.)
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part Three, chapters 1-3, Part Four, chapter 3.

Paper Topic (2/23): Domhoff and Foucault each offer important accounts of how power operates. Compare and contrast these two accounts and, in doing so, make a careful argument vis-à-vis which theorist you consider to have the most compelling understanding of how power actually works within contemporary society.

II. Power, Sexuality and Gender:

Week 5 (Feb. 27 & Mar. 2): Culture Wars as Emergent Phenomena
Moon, *God, Sex, and Politics*, Introduction, chapters 1-3.
*James Davison Hunter, "Competing Moral Visions" in *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. 107-32.

Week 6 (Mar. 6 & 9): The Politics of Emotion and Pain
Moon, *God, Sex, and Politics*, chapters 5-8, Conclusion.
Guest Speakers

Week 7 (Mar. 13 & 16): En-Gendering the Power of Tradition
Manning, *God Gave Us the Right*, chapters 1-5.
*Alan Wolfe, "Tradition" in *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (New York: Free Press, 2003), pp. 97-126.

Week 8 (Mar. 20 & 23): The Fate of Feminism in Conservative Religion
Manning, *God Gave Us the Right*, chapters 6-10.
Guest Speakers

Paper Topic (3/23): How and to what extent do religious traditions and institutions legitimate normative understandings of sexuality and gender? Do you consider this to be a form of power? Do you consider it to be problematic and, in any case, what are the prospects for resistance among religious adherents seeking change?

Week 9: Reading Week

III. The Dialectics of Race and Class:

Week 10 (Apr. 3 & 6): Disciplining and Punishing in the Reproduction of Power Relations
Ferguson, *Bad Boys*, chapters 1-4, 7 and 8.

Week 11 (Apr. 10 & 13): Religion as the “Amphetamine of the People?”
Wood, *Faith in Action*, chapters 1-4.
*Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1995): 65-78.

Week 12 (Apr. 17 & 20): How Political Culture Matters
Wood, *Faith in Action*, chapters 5-8.
Guest Speakers

Week 13 (Apr. 24 & 27): “Everyway of Seeing is a Way of Not Seeing”
Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, Introduction, chapters 1-4.
*Cornel West, “A Genealogy of Modern Racism” in *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 47-65.
*Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 39-65.

Week 14 (May 1 & 4): Evangelical Christianity in Black and White
Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, chapters 5-8, Conclusion
Guest Speakers

Paper Topic (5/4): How and to what extent do religious actors and institutions challenge and/or perpetuate power imbalances based on racial and class divisions? Do you consider this to be problematic and, in any case, what are the prospects for resistance among religious adherents seeking change?

IV. The Good Society: Institutionalizing the “Better Angels of Our Nature:”

Week 15 (May 8 & 11): Communities of Faith

Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith*, chapters 1, 2 and 4.

*Robert N. Bellah, et al., “Introduction: We Live Through Institutions” in *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 4-18.

*Robert Wuthnow, “Reassembling the Civic Church: The Changing Role of Congregations in American Civil Society” in Richard Madsen, et al., *Meaning and Modernity: Religion, Polity, and Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 163-80.

Guest Speakers

Week 16 (May 15 & 18): Faith in Community

Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith*, chapters 5, 6 and 8.

*Jerome P. Baggett, “The Catholic Citizen: Perennial Puzzle or Emergent Oxymoron?” *Social Compass* (forthcoming).

Paper Topic (5/18): How significant do you consider U.S. congregations to be with respect to institutionalizing people’s connections to community and their capacity for contributing to the good of their surrounding communities? How optimistic are you vis-à-vis congregations’ capacity for rectifying some of the more problematic and/or unjust power imbalances within American society?