

## SYLLABUS

TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL MILWAUKEE EXTENSION  
EASTBROOK CHURCH, 5353 N GREEN BAY AVE., MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53209

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### ID 6000

### The Political Disciple: Thinking Christianly in a Tumultuous World

Wrap-Around Course  
Fall 2020  
1-credit Hour



### Instructor

Vincent Bacote, PhD  
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*“We each have to ask ourselves an important question when we consider the whole of our Christian beliefs together: What difference do my beliefs make for the world around me?”*  
- Vincent Bacote, *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*

### Course Description

This course will focus on how a Christian can live faithfully in an increasingly polarized world. In the midst of the combative rhetoric found in our culture, is there a place for a Christian to engage in the public square modeling Christlikeness and fidelity to God’s Word? The course will seek to address the perceived tension between allegiance to a nation and ultimate faithfulness to God’s Kingdom.

### Course Objectives

1. Develop a biblical framework for practicing public engagement in our increasingly complex culture and world.
2. Develop a practical theology that will help the student serve God in public practice.
3. Become aware of one’s own attitudes about faith and its role in public life.
4. Develop a practical response to the question, “What difference do my beliefs make for the world around me?”
5. Be able to identify pressing social issues facing the Church in our current times. How does the believer live in the tension between being a spectator and engaging our culture in establishing God’s kingdom?
6. Explore ministry approaches/opportunities for living as a “political disciple.”

### Course Format

The course will be taught as a wrap-around course in conjunction with the 2020 Eastbrook Church Faith and Politics Lecture Series. Students will attend a lecture and a class session specifically for TEDS students enrolled in ID6000 (see schedule below).

The class session will include a significant amount of student-teacher interaction, group discussion, and reporting on student assignments.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Punctuality and engaged participation in a full-day class on Saturday, October 17 from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm held at Eastbrook Church. Involvement and interaction during the class session is expected. Tardiness may significantly impact the student's successful completion of the class.
2. Demonstrate comprehension of self-selected readings through interaction in class.
3. Read a minimum of 560 pages (three books) from the Reading Resource List. All reading is to be completed before the start of the October 17 Saturday class. One of the three books is to be *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life* (88 pages).
4. Write a three to four-page (minimum of 750-1000 words, double-spaced) reading reflective paper for each book read (3 papers in total). These are not book reports. The papers provide you with an opportunity to synthesize the reading into three main areas: 1) Provide 2 or 3 salient principles gleaned from the book, 2) Describe 2 or 3 items the learned about your world, and 3) Describe how the reading affects your own personal engagement in the world. The reading reflective papers will be emailed to the professor by Saturday, October 17.
5. Write a three to four-page (750-1000 words, double-spaced) reflection paper flowing out of the student's attendance Vincent Bacote's presentation at Eastbrook Church on September 28. In the paper 1) briefly summarize the speaker's main point(s) and 2) state how the speaker's presentation impacted your development of a theology of public life. The paper will be emailed to the professor by Saturday, October 17.
6. During the October 17 class each student will speak for 5 – 10 minutes on the subject of, "What difference do my beliefs make for the world around me?" (see Vincent Bacote's question, "Can there be Christian faithfulness in the public realm?" *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*, p. 14). Students should at least have an outline for their brief presentation to help guide their presentation.

### **Class Participation**

Participation in class discussions on October 17 is a significant part of the learning experience. Students should be prepared to interact with the professor and other students on readings and written assignments. Meaningful participation in class discussion demonstrates that you have read and thought about the required readings.

COURSE SCHEDULE			
Date	Day	Time	Special Note
Sept 28	Monday	7:00 PM	<b>Dr. Vincent Bacote Lecture</b>
Oct 17	Saturday	8:30 to 3:00 PM	<b>Class with Lunch break</b>

### Grading

Grading for the class is on a Pass/No Credit basis with successful completion of the course requiring:

- Full attendance at the presentation on September 28 at Eastbrook Church
- Required book readings completed by October 17
- Required reading and reflection papers submitted by October 17
- Full-day attendance at the October 17 class with participation showing the student has engaged intellectually, academically, and personally with the course subject matter

### Formatting Guidelines

The reading/reflection papers must meet the minimum formatting standards defined below. Grammar, idiom, and spelling must be up to graduate level. Qualities valued include clarity, succinctness, and precision.

Your paper must be a minimum of 750 words (not to exceed 1000 words), follow current Turabian format, and include the following:

- Cover page
- 1-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides)
- Double-spaced lines (approximately 3 vertical lines per inch, 27 lines per page)
- 12-point Times New Roman font
- Paragraphs indented 5 spaces or 0.6 inch (our thesis standard is 5/8 inch)

### Resource Reading List:

The student will read a minimum of 560 pages from a minimum of 3 books in this Resource Reading List – one book will be *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life* by V. Bacote

Vincent E. Bacote. *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*. Ordinary Theology Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015. (90 pages – a summary of key issues on faith engaging culture)

Amy E. Black. *Beyond Left and Right: Helping American Christians Make Sense of American Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. (254 pages – Wheaton College political science professor offers an engaging look at key issues in political theology with attention to key issues)

- Amy E. Black, ed. *Five Views on the Church and Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015. (240 pages – part of Zondervan’s Counterpoints series, this book offers outlines of political thought from Anabaptist, African America, Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed perspectives, with responses to each outline by others)
- James H. Cone. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011. (224 pages – Cone’s last book offers an influential interpretation of the Cross of Christ in light of African American experience and perspective)
- Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony, expanded 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014. (198 pages – a prophetic vision of how the Church can regain its vitality, battle its malaise, reclaim its capacity to nourish souls, and stand firmly against the illusions, pretensions, and eroding values of today’s world)
- James Davison Hunter. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. (368 pages – the author engages with prevailing Christian approaches to changing the world and political engagement with a suggestion of a way forward through “faithful presence”)
- Richard John Niehaus. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984. (280 pages – long-time author and founder of the journal *First Things*, Niehaus offers a conservative evangelical vision of political engagement)
- James W. Skillen. *The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014. (214 pages – the author evaluates the biblical drama, key historical developments, and pathways toward engaging contemporary political issues)
- James K. A. Smith. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017. (256 pages – the third part of Smith’s cultural liturgies series offers an Augustinian model for engaging the current political situation in our culture that is rooted in worship)
- Tom Wright. *God in Public: How the Bible speaks truth to power today*. London: SPCK, 2016. (190 pages – a little known work of NT Wright that, while somewhat English in application, offers an approach to biblical theology that throws fresh light on political and ethical problems of our day)
- Jim Wallis. *God’s Politics*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005. (384 pages – long-time author and editor of *Sojourners*, Wallis offers a progressive evangelical vision of political engagement)
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### **Additional Supportive Reading List:**

Augustine. *City of God*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin Classics, 1972. (1184 pages – Augustine’s magisterial exploration of the relationship between the city of God and the city of earth)

Gregory A. Boyd. *The Myth of a Christian Nation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. (207 pages – written around the 2004 election, Boyd’s central thesis is “a significant segment of American evangelicalism is guilty of nationalistic and political idolatry”)

D. A. Carson. *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. (255 pages – an evangelical New Testament scholar offers a revision of Niebuhr’s typology of Christian cultural engagement with a chapter on church and state)

Craig A. Carter. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006. (224 pages – a critique of Richard Niebuhr’s typology and proposes a typology better suited to mission after Christendom)

William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey, Craig Hovey. *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. (836 pages – a collection of 49 readings from key thinkers on political theology in the past couple centuries)

Eugene Cho. *Thou Shalt Not Be a Jerk: A Christian’s Guide for Engaging Politics*. Nashville: David C. Cook, 2020. (272 pages – a pastor addresses the manner in which we engage in contemporary political discussions as Christians)

Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw. *Jesus for President*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. (355 pages – the authors offer a progressive evangelical theology that critiques American Christianity’s subjugation to empire)

James H. Cone. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1970. (192 pages – one of Cone’s breakthrough books, applying liberation theology to the African American experience and perspective)

Andy Crouch. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. (284 pages – while not strictly about politics, Crouch offers a modern approach to broader cultural engagement for evangelicals)

- Patrick J. Deneen. *Why Liberalism Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. (264 pages – an evaluation of why liberalism – in contrast to communism and fascism – is the only remaining viable ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also how inherent features of the success of liberalism are generating its own failure)
- Rod Dreher. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Sentinel Books, 2017. (304 pages – a conservative Christian approach to facing into the cultural shifts and political issues of our day)
- Jacques Ellul. *The Subversion of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. (222 pages – Ellul was an influential and iconoclastic 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker, and this book specifically looks at the deviation between the life of the Church and the teachings of Jesus)
- John Fea. *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011. (287 pages – a historical survey of American religion and politics with attention to specific figures in response to the question in the title)
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018. (238 pages – a historian’s evaluation of factors, particularly a politics of fear, that contributed to 80% of white evangelicals voting for Donald Trump)
- Frances Fitzgerald. *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017. (740 pages – a Pulitzer-prize winning historian offers an insightful history of how evangelicalism has shaped American culture and politics)
- Greg Forster. *The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. (254 pages –introduces the history of Christian political thought traced out in Western culture—a culture experiencing the dissolution of a long-fought-for consensus around natural law theory)
- Gustavo Gutierrez. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988. (334 pages – a classic of liberation theology from Latin America)
- Jonathan Haidt. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012. (419 pages – professor of psychology addresses the divisions within our society and a potential pathway forward through mutual understanding)
- Willie James Jennings. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven: Yale U. P., 2010. (384 pages – a look at the concept of race and the way it shapes our theology and approach to many issues, including politics)

George Kalantzis and Gregory W. Lee, eds. *Christian Political Witness*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014. (240 pages – a collection of essays on biblical, historical and theological proposals for thinking responsibly about the intersection of church and state in the contemporary cultural situation)

David T. Koyzis. *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003. (281 pages – the author examines five common political visions – liberalism, conservatism, democracy, nationalism, and socialism – offering a Christian critique of each and suggested way forward)

Abraham Kuyper. *Lectures on Calvinism: Six Lectures from the Stone Foundation Lectures Delivered at Princeton University*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1898, 2008. (182 pages – a classic representation of the Reformed tradition and the basis of what seem view as a distinctly Kuyperian approach to cultural engagement)

Tremper Longman III. *The Bible and the Ballot: Using Scripture in Political Decisions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. (310 pages – an Old Testament scholar provides a specifically biblical approach to issues that are divisive in our political sphere)

Reinhold Niebuhr. *Major Works on Religion and Politics*. Library of America. New York: Library of America, 2015. (850 pages – Niebuhr was one of the premier thinkers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and his political thought continues to influence writers and practitioners, including Barack Obama)

H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951. (259 pages – this classic work provided the most enduring typology for evaluating Christian engagement with culture since its publication)

Mark A. Noll. *God and Race in American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. P., 2008. (226 pages – the premier historian of American evangelicalism evaluates the way that religion and race have factored into American politics)

Oliver O'Donovan. *The Desire of Nations: Rediscovering the roots of political theology*. New York: Cambridge U. P., 1996. (304 pages – a work of systematic Christian political thought, combining Biblical interpretation, historical discussion of the Western political and theological tradition, theoretical construction and critical engagement with contemporary views)

\_\_\_\_\_ and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. (858 pages – a reference tool that provides an overview of the history of Christian political thought with selections from second century to the seventeenth century)

C. C. Pecknold. *Christianity and Politics: A Brief Guide to the History*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010. (196 pages – a brief guide to the history of Christianity and politics, showing how early Christianity reshaped the Western political imagination with its new theological claims about eschatological time, participation, and communion with God and neighbor)

James K. A. Smith. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017. (256 pages – the third part of Smith's cultural liturgies series offers an Augustinian model for engaging the current political situation in our culture that is rooted in worship)

Miroslav Volf. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011. (192 pages – Volf writes a lot about human flourishing and the common good, and this book serves as a good introduction to his line of thinking and practice on these issues)

John Howard Yoder. *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972. (260 pages – Yoder's classic outline of an Anabaptist view of cultural engagement has shaped many thinkers up to this day)