

# BRIERCREST

## THEO 753 Thy Kingdom Come: Church, Politics & Eschatology Winter 2022

Professor: David Guretzki

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Course Dates: March 14-18, 2022

3 Credit Hours

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

After his resurrection, Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father. As King, the ascended Christ calls into question the ultimate authority of all political and social structures without completely doing away with them. This course attempts to grapple with the complex problem of Christian political engagement, particularly within a Canadian context. Themes such as the prophetic authority of the church in her proclamation of the kingdom and the eschatological shape of human political relations are explored.

### COURSE INTEGRATION

As Canada moves ever more firmly into a post-Christian existence, questions of the relationship between the Church and political authorities are increasingly germane. Pastors and Christian leaders especially are called upon both to guide Christians on how it is that they are to engage with these authorities. This class will seek not only to give pastors and leaders some basics in political theory, but also to help them clarify basic theological convictions on the nature of the relationship of the Church and political realities in light of God's coming eschatological kingdom announced in Scripture.

Note: Rather than a linear progression or building upon of material, this class will rather be thematic in nature. Each topic will somewhat stand on its own and is designed to introduce students to a wide range of issues and perspectives on what it means to have and do political theology. At minimum, however, the course will provide biblical exegesis, theological reflection on political theology itself, consideration of the Canadian context and history, and insights from Christian political practitioners.

### COURSE TEXTS (Read in this order, please)

Koyzis, David T. *Political Visions & Illusions*. 2d ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2019.

Barth, Karl. *Community, State and Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Yoder, John Howard. *The Christian Witness to the State*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002.

Hutchinson, Don. *Under Siege: Religious Freedom and the Church in Canada at 150*. Winnipeg: Word Alive Press, 2017.

One of the following:

Blaikie, Bill. *The Blaikie Report: An Insider's Look at Faith and Politics*. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2011. [Blaikie is a United Church minister and former long-time NDP Member of Parliament]

Manning, Preston. *Faith, Leadership and Public Life*: Toronto, ON: Castle Quay Books, 2017. [Manning was the founder of the Reformed Party of Canada and served as the Leader of the Opposition in Canada's Parliament.]

*Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.*

*These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.*

*Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.*

## COURSE OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have reflected deeply on the paradigmatic role of Romans 13:1-7 as a biblical basis for key questions of political theology.
- Have a working knowledge of basic political ideologies (liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, democracy, and socialism) and Christian responses to these ideologies.
- Gain an understanding of how the Christian doctrines of the resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ intersect with and inform one's ecclesiology and the church's relationship to political realities.
- Become familiar with and differentiate between a Reformed (Barth) and Anabaptist (Yoder) on the relationship of the church and public life.
- Become better aware of the history of the religious rights in Canada.
- Have raised awareness of some distinctly Canadian Christian political practitioners' voices on the role of Christian faith and the church in public and political life.
- Reflect upon their own theo-political convictions and articulate their view on a current political issue in a written piece for broad public consumption.
- Complete a research project on a currently politically significant topic from an intentionally defined position on the relationship of church and state.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT (some guests/topics subject to change)

The following is a thematic outline of the class and will not necessarily be covered in order. Various guest speakers will join the class, including current and past politicians, legal practitioners, and specialists. A more detailed outline of the week will be made available a couple weeks before class as availability of certain guest speakers will not be able to be confirmed until closer to the class date.

### Part 1: Biblical and Theological Foundations

- Introduction: Questioning Political Theology
- The Dying, Living, Risen, Reigning, Returning Lord Jesus Christ of the Gospels: Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology as Questions to Political Authority
- The Church, Authority, and the Authorities: Exegeting Romans 13:1-7
- Christ, the Church, Principalities and Powers, and the Mediation of Authority

**Part 2: Models of Political Theology**

- Visions of Protestant Political Theologies: Comparing Reformed (Barth) and Anabaptist (Yoder) Visions
- Other Political Theologies: Neo-Christendom (Oliver O'Donovan); Christian Realism (Reinhold Niebuhr) and Catholic Political Theology (J.B. Metz)

**Part 3: Themes in Canadian Political Life and Theology**

- "Use of Religious Rights in a post-Christian Canada" (Guest: Don Hutchinson)
- The Canadian Church, Democracy, and The New Political Orthodoxy (Guest: Bruce Clemenger, President, The EFC)
- Politics and the Social Good: An Historical case study of William Aberhart's Social Credit (Alberta) and J.S. Woodsworth/Tommy Douglas's CCF (Saskatchewan) social visions (Video Documentary: *The Social Gospel and the Public Good*)
- The Religious Vote in Canada: Political Affinities amongst Canada's Christians (Guest: Rick Hiemstra, Director of Research, The EFC)
- Principles of Political Engagement in the Canadian Context (Guest: Julia Beazley, Director of Public Policy, The EFC)
- Entering Politics as a Christ Followers: Panel discussion with current and former MP's (TBD)

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

***Pre-Course Assignments:***

All pre-course requirements need to be uploaded to Canvas before the beginning of class on **March 14, 2022**.

- 1) **Pre-course Reading.** Read the course texts above in the order assigned. Complete and submit the reading report available on Canvas. The report will consist of a self-assessment worth 10% of your total class mark, 8% of which will be for completion of the texts, and 2% for your own assessment of how well you engaged. This is completely on the honour system. [Auditors: Please note that in order to benefit most from this class, it is imperative to read the course texts in advance of the course.]

Weight: 10%

- 2) **Barth and Yoder Comparative Paper**

In preparation for discussion during the week, prepare a comparative chart (as below) in which you seek to provide a textual/visual overview of the positions of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder as represented in the two course texts. You might think of the chart as a teaching aid that might be used to introduce the positions of each theologian. However, the primary two-fold purpose of the chart is to help you clarify in your own mind the similarities and differences between the two theologians and to prepare you for the extensive discussion of each theologian that will ensue in class.

The content of the chart needs obviously to be concise (bullet points). You can think of anywhere between 1 to 4 (maximum) bullet points for each category.

	Barth	Yoder
Biographical details (very basic; will need to find outside sources)		
What is the purpose of the state?		
What is the relationship between the church and state?		
What does it mean to "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's"?		
What does it mean to submit to civil authorities (Rom 13)?		
Is there a political ideology that is closest to the biblical vision? (socialism, democracy, etc.)		
What are examples of faithful Christian political witness?		
[One or two additional categories of your own]		

Weight: 20%

***Mid-Course Assignment:***

Students will be assigned at the beginning of the week to do a maximum 5-minute presentation on one of the categories from the comparative chart above and then lead the class on a short (time will depend on number of students) discussion of the merits and weaknesses of both theologians.

Weight: 10% (evaluation will be a combination of quality of presentation and quality of leading the class in discussion).

***Post-Course Assignments:***

All post course assignments are due 8 weeks after the last day of class (i.e., May 13, 2022).

**1) Political Op-Ed Piece**

Choose a topic of theological import that is currently (or if not, in your opinion should be) being debated in the current Canadian context. Write a 600 word "op-ed" piece that could be submitted to a local newspaper or news-site in which you seek to advance an argument that is "subtly but clearly Christian." ("Be a wise as serpents, and innocent as doves." Matt 10:16).

A good primer on writing op-eds can be found here: [https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new\\_seglin\\_how\\_to\\_write\\_an\\_oped\\_1\\_25\\_17\\_7.pdf](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf)

Some potential topics:

Abortion, Medical assistance in death, prostitution, vaccination mandates, vaccination passports, Indigenous reconciliation, Indigenous land rights, genetic testing for pre-screening infant with option to abort, conscientious objection, conversion therapy ban, freedom of speech on campuses, limits of freedom of belief, freedom of voluntary association, internet censorship, public funding of media, international aid policy, refugees and immigration policy, parental and mandatory education, hate speech bans, local housing policies, environmental policies, interprovincial relations, human and sex trafficking laws, etc.

You may write on political topics from a federal, provincial, or civic perspective, providing that you are seeking to provide a Christian perspective.

You may benefit from browsing the following sites which deal with many different political issues:

[www.theEFC.ca](http://www.theEFC.ca) (The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)

[www.cmdacanada.org](http://www.cmdacanada.org) (The Christian Medical and Dental Association of Canada)

[www.arpacanada.ca](http://www.arpacanada.ca) (The Association of Reformed Political Action Canada)

[www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca) (Citizens for Public Justice)

[www.cija.ca](http://www.cija.ca) (Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs)

Your op-ed will need to be a maximum of 600 words, perfectly edited, persuasive, accessible to a broad audience (i.e., do not presume Christian assumptions of your readers), and of course, compelling to read. Write from the professional perspective you already hold or anticipate holding, e.g., pastor, Christian organizational leader, educator, etc.

Weight: 20%

**2) Major Theology Research Paper**

As an advanced theology elective, students may write a paper on any topic of their choosing, providing it falls reasonably within the spectrum of discussion as raised in this class. Papers may deal with a particular theologian, a political practitioner, an ecclesial-political movement, a close exegesis of a politically relevant biblical text, a theological idea intersecting with political categories (e.g., the Trinity and politics), or a position paper on a current ecclesio- or ethico-political matter.

Papers should be no more than 12 pages double-spaced. Evaluation will be based on sound and warranted use of Scripture in the paper, evidence of depth of research (a minimum of at least 8 sources other than the Bible), awareness of competing positions, originality of thesis/argument, clarity of expression and adherence to proper format guidelines. Please refer to the Briercrest Format Guide for proper documentation procedures.

Weight: 40%

## SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:  
<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

### ***Attendance Policy***

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

#### *Modular Courses*

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

#### *Online Courses*

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

#### *Semester-Based Courses*

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

### ***Course Schedules***

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

### ***Assignment Submission***

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week

after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

#### ***Return of Graded Assignments***

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

#### ***Academic Honesty***

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

#### ***Academic Accommodations***

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Director of Student Success in person (L234 in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email ([egordon@briercrest.ca](mailto:egordon@briercrest.ca)). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).