

## **Christians and Politics** **How to Be a Good Neighbour in Unneighbourly Times**

**Instructor:** Michael Morelli, PhD

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**Dates:** View seminar recordings Oct. 1-14; attend Zoom discussions October 16; 23; and 30 at 10:00am; submit final assignment

**Venue:** Online

### *Description*

These days it can be difficult to talk about politics, let alone practice politics, without there being tension, division, and/or violence. This micro-course goes beyond common right, left, and centre divides to provide critical and constructive resources for thinking about and practicing politics in Christ-formed, neighbourly ways.

People who complete this micro-credential offering will become familiar with political theology in the Christian tradition. They will develop critical thinking skills and discover constructive practices that can help them analyze contemporary political trends and foster peace in divisive social contexts.

### *Student Learning Outcomes*

#### **Knowledge and Intellectual Formation (Cognitive Domain)**

- Engage the Bible, Christian tradition, and interdisciplinary resources to analyze contemporary political trends.
- Constructively dialogue with other people about contemporary political trends.

#### **Practical Skills (Practical Domain)**

- Propose practices, based on engagement with scripture, theology, interdisciplinary resources, and dialogue, that cultivate peace in divisive social and political contexts.

#### **Character Formation (Affective Domain)**

- Become a person of peace in your context though testing, reflecting on, and if needed refining, constructive practices.

### *Required Resource*

- Phillips, Elizabeth. *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012.
- Cavanaugh, William T. *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

### *Suggested Resources*

- Cramer, David C., and Myles Werntz. *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.
- Florer Bixler, Melissa. *How To Have an Enemy: Righteous Anger and the Work of Peace*. Harrisonberg: Herald Press, 2021.

## Assessment Tools

**Live discussion dialogue: 40% of final grade**

**View seminar recordings and share questions/comments between October 1 and 14**  
**Attend live discussions October 16; 20; and 30 at 10:00-11:15am**

Curious and constructive dialogue is integral to engaging with people in conversations about contentious questions, so meaningful participation in live discussions is an essential part of this micro-credential offering. In terms of 'meaningful participation,' I mean showing up to each of our meetings and speaking thoughtfully to the questions we explore with each other. If you can do that, you will receive full marks for this assessment component.

Following engagement with the recorded instruction videos, our micro-course cohort will meet online via Zoom three times (each meeting will be an hour and fifteen minutes), to discuss the content in semi-structured conversations guided by the instructor. Online meetings will generally assume the following format:

- 10-15 minutes: opening remarks, including outline of key themes/questions for discussion, provide by instructor
- 35-45 minutes: guide discussion
- 10-15 minutes: closing remarks, tying up of loose ends, by instructor

**Field project: 60% of final grade**  
**Submit by 11:59pm November 20**

This assignment is divided into three parts—theory, practice, and reflection/revision—to give you an opportunity to (1) think about how this course has broadened and deepened your sense of political theology, (2) propose a practice that applies it to your context, and (3) act, by testing and reflecting on your practice in your context. With that in view, here is a step-by-step guide for your field project.

It can be in written form, or it could be a video presentation, and should cover the following three topics/sections.

### Think (500 words or 2 minutes)

Form a clear, concise, and creative personal political theology based on what you learned in live sessions, readings, and any other resources you think are useful.

You do not need to summarize everything you learned. Rather, the goal is to take one or two key ideas that resonated with you, and build on them in a way that applies directly to your life and ministry context.

### Propose (500 words or 2 minutes)

Based on your personal political theology, propose one or two things that you can do in your context to cultivate peace. Make sure it is manageable (within the timeframe of this project), and something new that you are not currently doing.

### Act (500 words or 2 minutes)

Based on your proposed practice(s), find an opportunity (or opportunities) to test it out. Once you have done this, describe what you did, how it went, and if you would make any revisions. Conclude with a short proposal for further work in these areas.

## Recorded Seminars Outline

Content
Section One
1. Introduction
1a. Introduction: The Courage to Admit Something is Broken
1b. Description of competencies
2. Foundations
2a. The rise of the state: there was a time when the state did not exist
2c. Genesis 4: The uncivilized origins of 'civilization'
Section Three

3. Theories
3a. The authoritarian personality: why the problem is not only 'out there'
3b. "We want a king" syndrome: why people vote for tyrants
3c. "Here is your king!" a different (better) kind of politics
4. Practices
4a. Luke 10:25-37: Love your neighbour
4b. Ephesians 6:10-12: Fight the powers with prayers
4c. Romans 12 and 13: Feed your enemies
4d. Acts 9: Baptize a zealot blinded by heaven's light
4e. 1 Corinthians 11: Break bread, pour wine with your neighbour
4f. 2 Timothy 4: Preach (the Word)!
Section Three
Conclusion

### ***Resulting Academic Credit***

This micro course leads to 1 hour of academic credit at Northwest. Usually this will be recognized with a "Letter of Completion" issued to document continuing education work. Completion of 3 Lifelong Learning micro courses in a three-part series (or 3 closely related topics), worth a total of 3 credit hours, may be applied to another Northwest competency-based credential such as the GAP Year, CCF, or possibly a Graduate Certificate.

If you are in or are thinking about enrolling in a CBTE program at Northwest, work you do for this micro course offering may be used for advanced standing in the following competencies:

#### **Undergraduate**

- 307. Share the Gospel with Cultures: competencies 307.2 and 3
- 309. Advocate for Justice: competency 309.3

#### **Graduate**

- 701. Culture: competency 701.1
- 704. Wisdom: competency 704.2