

Political Science 119A
The Bible and Political Theory
Winter 2007

Professor David Forman-Barzilai
SSB 364, Tel:2-2257
E-mail: dfb@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: Wed 2-3:30

Course Description:

The Bible is the most influential book in the history of western thought. Its themes and ideas have been shaping the way we think about ourselves, the world, our communities, and our place in them for two millennia. The purpose of this course will be to highlight the political dimensions of the Bible and to provide students with an introduction to the main themes and narratives in political theory, such as human nature, divine will and right, religion and the state, leadership, law and order, human rights, criminal law and justice and war and peace. We will focus on the Hebrew Bible (the TANAKH) but we will make some comparative observations with other sacred books, notably the New Testament and the Koran.

Course Procedure:

This course is about dialogue. Dialogue with the text. Dialogue in class. You should see it as an opportunity to visit or revisit these classic writings and to conduct a conversation with the voices and ideas they communicate to you. Consequently, come to class prepared to share your insight and opinions about them. During the term you will be asked to write three reports about the readings. These three reports will be your requirements for the course and they will determine your grade as follows.

Evaluation:

- A. First assignment (4-5 pages) -- 30%
- B. Second assignment (4-5 pages) -- 30%
- C. Final Paper (6-8 pages) -- 40%

Required Textbooks:

Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures (JPS, last edition)

The Hebrew Bible: A Social-Literary Introduction (with CD-Rom), Norman K. Gottwald
(Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2002) – Henceforth HBI

Recommended Textbook:

The Politics of Ancient Israel, Norman K. Gottwald (Westminster, John Knox, 2001) –
Henceforth PAI

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction: Historical Context

Readings: HBI, 1-147

Week 2 (no class on Monday, 1/15): Cosmological and Cosmopolitan Foundations – Human Nature and The Laws of Nature

Readings: TH, Genesis 1-11

Week 3: Socio-political Foundations – Covenant as the Social Contract

Readings: TH, Genesis 12-50

HBI, 150-178

Week 4: Moral and legal Foundations (the priestly leadership) – The Lockean Model

Readings: Exodus

Leviticus

HBI, 180-227

First assignment due in class on Friday, 2/2

Week 5: Tribal Politics, Judges and Prophets – Rousseau's Anthropology

Readings: Joshua, Judges

1 Samuel, 1-7

HBI, 230-288

Week 6: The Emergence of the King – Real Machiavellism

Readings: 1 Samuel, especially 8-12

2 Samuel

Deut 17.14-20

Judges 9. 7-15, 19-21

HBI, 294-336

Week 7(no class on Monday, 3/19): The Israelite Monarchy

1 Kings, 1-12

2 Kings, 22-23.30

HBI, 366-404

Second assignment due in class on Friday 3/23

Week 8: Two Hebrew states, no solution – Hobbes' *Homo homini lupus est*

Readings: 1 Kings, 13-22

2 Kings, 1-17

HBI, 338-363

Week 9: Judea between Prophets and Kings – Divine Will *against* Might Makes Right

Readings: The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos

HBI, 458-512

Week 10: Exilic Politics; or Theocracy without Land

Readings: Daniel, Ester, Nehemiah, Ezra

HBI, 420-456

Final paper is due on Wed, March 21, Noon-12:30, in class