

**Reason, Revelation & Politics**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE 309R - - Winter 2008**

**Ralph C. Hancock**  
**750 SWKT**  
**422-3302**

**T-Th 1:35-2:50, 793 SWKT**

**Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm, or by appt.**

### **Guiding Questions**

Political life is bound up with human choice and responsibility, and thus with forethought and discussion, that is, with the claims of reason. But reason is necessarily limited in its access to ends as well as to means, and so an appeal to some authority beyond reason seems also to be inherent in politics and indeed in human existence more generally. Our (“Western”) civilization has been shaped by the confluence of the authority of Greek philosophy on one the hand and of that of the Bible on the other, as well as by the tension between these two authorities. Not long ago, many hoped, and others feared, that this confluence and this tension were about to be definitively overcome by the full ascendancy of a secular, rationalistic order. But this hope has waned, under the pressure of events and, no doubt, due to its own internal incoherence. For do we even know what “secular” means? Or can reason by itself frame the meaning of life for an individual or for a community? And yet no common religion seems to be available as a source of public authority. How, then, can we – as individuals and as members of a political community – find our way in this era that, it seems, can be neither confidently rational and secular nor publicly religious? How might we reasonably address the claims of reason and of revelation in such times?

### **Specific Learning Objectives**

The various elements of this class (readings, lectures, discussions, assignments and exams) are intended to help the student learn to:

- recognize and intelligently employ a number of terms of philosophical and political analysis,
- understand the main ideas of each author considered, and be able to compare and contrast the various authors,
- summarize and independently critique important philosophical arguments, and write about them in a clear and orderly fashion,
- be critically aware of conventional assumptions that limit much current thought,
- see the practical consequences of abstract philosophical ideas, think more deeply and coherently about their own moral and political commitments.

### **Required Texts:**

Remi Brague, *The Law of God*

Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God*

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*

(And other short pieces to be provided)

## **Graded Assignments & Exams**

### **Summary-Responses**

Students will submit 1000-2000-word summary/responses every other Monday. The class will be divided into two groups: one group will submit the first summary 1/15 and the other 1/22. These papers should address all the readings for the past two weeks, although some texts may be emphasized more than others. Some integration and synthesis is expected, taking into account themes emphasized in class discussions, although due credit will be given to all signs of significant progress in comprehension and clear restatement of the main points of the texts. 7 summaries @ 20 points possible; scores for the *three* best summaries will be doubled = 200 points.

### **Final Exam**

An essay question or set of essay questions will be announced in advance for the comprehensive final exam. 100 points.

**Unannounced Quizzes**, worth 10 points or less, may be administered to encourage preparation for class (review of key points in previous discussions and familiarity with required readings).

### **Participation**

Constructive, well-informed and well-considered class participation will tend to lift the grade of a student, especially if his/her grade is on or near a border.

### **Optional Course Paper**

A student may elect to submit a paper of 4000-6000 words which would integrate themes of the class with a discussion of a text beyond those required. (Students should consult with Prof. Hancock concerning the choice of such a text.) The 100 points for such a paper would increase the total points possible from 300 to 400 points (plus any quiz points).

### **Provisional Schedule of Reading Assignments**

1/8 Hancock, "Reason & Revelation."

1/10 Manent, "Faith and Reason;" Lawler, "Stuck-with-Virtue Conservatism"

1/15 Taylor, "Introduction."

1/17 Brague, "Introduction." Lilla, Introduction & ch. 1

1/22 Lilla, ch. 2

1/24 Lilla, ch. 3

1/29 Lilla, chs. 4,5

1/31 Lilla, chs. 6,7

2/5 Brague, chs. 1,2

2/7 Brague, ch. 3

2/12 Brague, chs.8,9  
2/14 Brague, ch. 10  
  
2/21 Brague, ch. 11  
  
2/26 Brague, ch. 12  
2/28 Brague, ch. 13  
  
3/4 Brague, ch. 14  
3/6 Brague, ch. 15  
  
3/11 Taylor, ch. 12  
3/13 Taylor, ch. 12 (cont.)  
  
3/18 Taylor, ch. 13  
3/20 Taylor, ch. 14  
  
3/25 Taylor, ch. 15  
3/27 Taylor, ch. 16  
  
4/1 Taylor, ch. 16 (cont.)  
4/3 Taylor, ch. 17  
  
4/8 Taylor, ch. 18  
4/10 Taylor, ch. 19  
  
4/12 Taylor, ch. 19 (cont.)

**FINAL EXAM – IN REGULAR CLASSROOM: Monday 21 April, 11am-2pm**

## **POLICY STATEMENTS:**

### Plagiarism:

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code can be found at [honorcode.byu.edu](http://honorcode.byu.edu). Details about Academic Honesty at the Honor Code site can be found by moving your mouse over "Honor Code" in the second grey bar and then move down then right and click on "Other Clarifications", then move your mouse down and click on "Academic Honesty."

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers.

### Discrimination:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

### Access:

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.