

Rel. 348 (E,O): Religion, Politics, and Society

Fall 2011

(NOTE: Check this page regularly for assignment updates. Be sure to "Refresh" or "Reload" page each time it is visited so that you get current view. ALL students must read ALL assignments and be prepared to lead the class discussion on them if called upon to do so.)

1. [Syllabus](#) (BE SURE AND READ BEFORE CLASS BEGINS)

2. Readings for first day of class. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the readings linked below in detail:

a. [A Framework for Thinking Ethically](#)

b. [The Origin of Ethical Behavior](#)

c. [A Difficult Birth: Navigating Language and Cultural Differences](#)

d. Two reflections on the situation: [1](#), [2](#)

g. [Applied Ethics Resources on WWW](#) (This link is provided solely as a site for further readings on ethics. It is not a mandatory reading for the first week. During the semester, other site links will be provided as well.)

3. Readings for 8/31/11: (free speech in religion and politics):

a. ["First Amendment in Schools"](#)

b. ["The Price of Free Speech"](#)

c. ["Why I Hate School Censorship"](#)

d. ["Religious Rights in the Workplace"](#)

e. [Free speech and Quran burning](#)

4. Readings for 9/7/11 (drug legalization)

a. [Between Politics and Reason](#)

b. [The Issue of Drug Legalization: Pros and Cons](#) (read all 3 pages)

c. Mexico and the drug war: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

d. [Alcohol and Tobacco: Two Dangerous Gateway Drugs](#)

5. Readings for 9/14/11: Students must come to class prepared to discuss the readings linked below. The class will be led by my Class Assistant, Colonel Earl Renfroe, Jr. USAF, Ret., who was a participant in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the subsequent movement that arose. His presentation will provide a personal perspective and also reveal historical aspects of the Civil Rights movement that are little known or discussed today.

a. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#).

b. [Alabama Clergy letter to Dr. Martin Luther King](#)

c. [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)

d. Questions to ponder after doing the reading above:

1. Why is Dr. King disappointed with the white moderate and the white church?
2. How are moral means used to preserve immoral ends?
3. How does Dr. King define an "unjust law?"
4. Does "order" compliment or impede justice?

6. First writing assignment (due Oct. 5 by email - no hard copy). Students are to watch at least five different TV series (preferably sitcoms) and five TV commercials in which at least one person is depicted negatively and one positively. You are to:

1. Identify the name of the TV program or the product being sold.
2. Identify by race, gender, age, body characteristics, sexual orientation, and any other noticeable characteristic, who is presented negatively and who is presented positively. Such stereotyping can be overt or subtle.
3. Submit a minimum 100 word write up on each (at least 10 write-ups). In each, explain in what way the person or persons are negatively and the persons are positively depicted and the relevance of such a characterization in the context of the program or commercial.
4. Submit a 300-word write up addressing the various prejudices found in doing the assignment and why you think they were used.

7. Readings for 9/21/11 (capital punishment):

- a. [10 Pros and Cons of Capital Punishment](#)
- b. [The Death Penalty: Morally Defensible?](#)
- c. [Against the American System of Capital Punishment](#)
- d. [Religious and moral views on the death penalty](#) - read the first link under "Social Issues" and the five links under "Religious Views." Be sure and take notes on this section, but there is no need to print out all the comments.

8. Readings for 9/28/11 (abortion):

- a. ["Religion and abortion"](#)
- b. ["No Middle Ground"](#)
- c. [A Summary of Pro-Choice Arguments](#)
- d. [Late Term Abortion -- Beyond The Anecdotes](#)
- f. ["An Abortion Rights Advocate Says He Lied About Procedure"](#)
- g. [Canadian Judge: No Jail Time for Infanticide](#)
- h. [Opinion polls on abortion](#)
- i. [Brazil's fertility rate](#)
- j. [Pregnancy timeline](#)

9. Readings for 10/5/11 (euthanasia and eugenics)

- a. [History of Euthanasia](#) (also read Hippocratic Oath)
- b. [Euthanasia: Pro and Con](#)
- c. [Legalization or tolerance?](#)
- d. Various religions views: [Buddhism and Christianity](#), [Hinduism](#), [Judaism](#), [Islam](#), Jainism [1](#), [2](#)
- e. Eugenics: [1](#) (read pp. 1-7), [2](#)

10. Readings for 10/12/11 (environmental and animal rights issues):

- a. Global warming: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#) (read up to the section entitled "Into the Laboratory, "), [4](#)
- b. Pollution and the meat industry: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

c. Ethics and animal abuse: [1](#), [2](#)

11. Readings for 10/19/11 (multiculturalism)

a. [Multiculturalism](#)

b. [Title VII Bilingual Education in Hawaii](#)

c. [A Closer Look at Asian Americans and Education](#)

d. [Don't blame tolerance for this multicultural mess](#)

e. [The downside of diversity](#)

f. [Time to Change Tune on Official Multiculturalism](#)

g. [Italian police fine woman for wearing burqa in public](#)

12. Readings for 10/26/11 and 11/2/11/(media bias)

a. [Ted Koppel on death of real news](#)

b. Detecting media bias: [1](#), [2](#)

c. Media bias examples: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#) (read the full articles used as examples in the boxes on the websites)

d. [Brendan O'Neill on BS stories](#)

e. [John Leo on liberal media](#) (search the Internet for polls on media bias. Is this article seem objective or does it, too , have a bias?)

f. Obama as divinity: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

g. [A New Take on Political Ideology](#) (analyze this article looking at the differences in words used to describe liberals and conservatives. What is the bias of the author? What does he really communicate in the article?)

h. Proposed Justice Dept rule changes

j. Border Agent Jesus E. Diaz Jr was just sentenced to 2 years in prison for supposedly roughing up and hurting the shoulder of a fleeing drug smuggler he arrested with nearly 70 lbs. of pot. The sentence seems to be a result of pressure on the Obama Administration by the Mexican govt. FYI, the smuggler had no bruises but was given immunity and was the main witness against the agent. The agent has already spent 8 months in solitary confinement awaiting trial. Note, 2 years in prison is more than some people have gotten for murder or infanticide.

i. Writing assignment #2: Considering the issue of media bias. Start by searching for reports on the two events listed above (rule changes and border agent) in the mainstream news media (tv, print, online). This includes ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox. In addition, analyze the difference between news media reports (current or in archives) on: 1) Democrats vs. Republicans, 2) Tea Party movement vs. Wall Street protesters, and 3) Obama Administration in general. In each case, listen to or read the news people, NOT the commentators. Then list what adjectives are used to describe, support, or criticize each of the issues on the list and the degree to which they are mentioned or ignored in the media. Due the day before Thanksgiving.