

## Course Requirements:

ANTH/HIST/POLI 4329—

# Seminar: Finding Civil Discourse (Fall 2014)

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Office hours: Daily 2-4, and by appt. (morning)

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**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** “A hands-on course designed to identify and cultivate the intellectual and moral virtues necessary for civil discourse in modern communities—local, regional, national, and international. Regularly emphasizing traditional Christian practices (e.g., hospitality, stewardship, and testimony) as a means for identifying and enacting those virtues, readings and discussions during the first half of the semester will explore the necessity and character of civil discourse and outline the nature of select virtues. During the second half of the semester students will learn about concrete virtues from off-campus visits with key figures in local, regional, national, and international governments and agencies regularly pursuing civil discourse. The final project will be a mock public session on a specific political or social problem in which students will demonstrate the place of particular virtues in civil discourse. Prerequisite: ENGL 1163.”

**SPECIFIC COURSE GOALS:** This course will

- cultivate and follow traditional Christian practices—through liturgical classroom prayer, out-of-class *lectio divina*, and semester-long journaling—as a means and context for identifying and encouraging the intellectual and moral virtues necessary for civil discourse;
- identify concrete virtues for civil discourse through visits with select representatives of local, regional, national, and international governments; the media; non-governmental agencies; and ecclesiastical organizations;
- determine how these virtues might “play out” in real life by preparing and presenting a mock session, open to the OBU and Shawnee communities, on a particular political or social problem.



**REACHING COURSE GOALS:** The course will address these three goals through a series of readings, discussions, group projects, and writing assignments:

Assignments:		Pts:	Grades:
<b>Participation</b>	In class, discuss the readings and ideas under consideration; during off-campus visits, ask questions and explore practitioners' experiences	100	A = 900-1000
			B = 800-899
			C = 700-799
<b>Journal</b>	Throughout the semester, keep an in-depth journal in three parts: <u>daily</u> reflections on the ways specific virtues and Christian practices can promote civil discourse; <u>weekly</u> accounts of your <i>lectio divina</i> of select passages from Scripture; <u>occasional</u> considerations of virtues identified during visits with practitioners. <u>Due 16 Dec.</u>	200	D = 600-699
			F = 599 or less
<b>Midterm virtue essay</b>	Identify a particular virtue discussed in class so far and write a <u>5-7 page essay</u> on its relationship to civil discourse. <u>Due 14 Oct.</u>	200	
<b>Final project: individual response</b>	Write a <u>10-12 page essay</u> answering this question: "Now that I better understand the necessity of civil discourse, and now that I know more about the intellectual and moral virtues that undergird it, by what concrete means might I continue to pursue those virtues and improve civil discourse?" <u>Due 16 Dec.</u>	300	
<b>Final project: group presentation</b>	Get with seminar members and identify a specific political and/or social issue of significance. Study the issue closely enough to be able to comment intelligently about it. Determine how (through role-playing, public debate, etc.) you all might effectively demonstrate civil discourse and the supporting virtues to the OBU and Shawnee communities. Then prepare a <u>forty-minute-long presentation</u> (skit, public debate, etc.) exemplifying civil discourse and its supporting virtues. You may also enact counter-examples (uncivil discourse and supporting vices) to highlight the features of fruitful discourse. <u>Project to be completed by 16 Dec.</u>	200	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>	

**Additional considerations:**

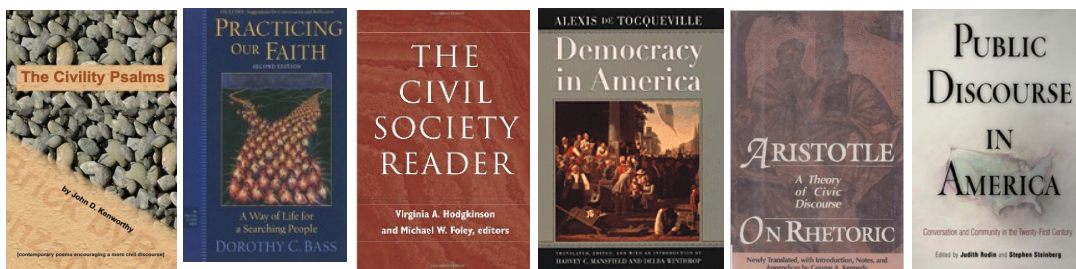
1. *The place of liturgical prayer and Christian spiritual practices:* Any consideration of virtues or spiritual qualities benefits from regular self-reflection and from an emphasis on enactment. Each class session will begin with a brief litany or liturgical prayer appropriate for the subject under consideration. The spaces (mental and physical) created through such repetition, along with

positive Scriptural injunctions, will provide opportunity for reflection and act as a framework of reminders about the course’s goals. Class sessions early in the semester will focus on several Christian spiritual practices allied with civil discourse. These practices all promote particular virtues. An understanding of these practices will ground discussions of the virtues that support civil discourse, for it is *through* these practices that Christian believers might develop such virtues. Christian practices both open the individual believer to new ways of loving God and neighbor and reorient the Christian community toward the public good in a pluralistic world.

2. *The role of lectio divina:* *Lectio divina* is an ancient monastic practice that promotes a deep reading of select scriptural passages. Through the steps of *lectio* (attentive multiple readings), *meditatio* (internal rumination on the text), *oratio* (a praying of the text), and *contemplatio* (a self-opening to God’s response), a believing reader gains a better sense of God’s love, nature, will, and commands. Each Monday I will assign a scriptural passage related to the week’s subject(s). Sometime during the week you are to set aside time to read the passage through the steps, then record your thoughts and experiences in your journal. This practice should both encourage your reflections on intellectual and moral virtues and help you see the relationships of virtues and spiritual practices to the pursuit of civil discourse.
  
3. *Off-campus visits:* No one knows the realities of civil discourse better than those charged with promoting and practicing it—governmental leaders, the media, non-governmental agencies, and church leaders. This course is unique because it gives half of the semester solely to conversations with practitioners about the character of real-life civil discourse (“in the trenches”) and the virtues necessary to pursue it. Follow-up assignments (journal entries, final individual response, final group presentation) allow you to bring together the discussions from early in the semester about virtues, practices, and civil discourse with the real-life experiences of people who are directly involved in using civil discourse for the public good.

**Grading criteria:** Your grades on assignments will assess:

- **Your seriousness of purpose** in following Christian spiritual practices and reflecting on the place of intellectual and moral virtues and civil discourse in your life;
- **Your attention to nuance** in understanding the operation of civil discourse and its supporting virtues;
- **Your care for precise expression** in exploring intellectual virtue and civil discourse;
- **Your insightful evaluation** of real-life examples of civil discourse and the ways that intellectual and moral virtues play out in its practice;
- **Your creative and engaging communication of ideas** on virtue and civil discourse to the OBU and Shawnee communities through the final group presentation.



**BOOKS TO GET:<sup>1</sup>**

Aristotle	Aristotle, <i>On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse</i> , trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford, 1991)
Bass	Dorothy C. Bass, ed., <i>Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.; Jossey-Bass, 2010)
H & F	Virginia Hodgkinson and Michael W. Foley, eds., <i>The Civil Society Reader</i> (Tufts, 2003)
Kenworthy	John D. Kenworthy, <i>The Civility Psalms: Contemporary Poems Encouraging a More Civil Discourse</i> (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013)
R & S	Judith Rodin and Stephen P. Steinberg, eds., <i>Public Discourse in America: Conversation and Community in the Twenty-First Century</i> (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003)
Tocq	Alexis de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, 2002)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Tues.	Topic	Reading	Thurs.	Topic	Reading
<b>Christian Practices, Civil Society, and Civil Discourse</b>					
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26 Aug.	Practices for civil discourse: Hospitality and Community-building	Bass, chs. 3, 9	28 Aug.	Practices for civil discourse: Discernment, Forgiveness, Healing	Bass, chs. 8, 10, 11
2 Sept.	Practices for civil discourse: Stewardship and Testimony	Bass, chs. 4, 7	4 Sept.	Virtue among the Ancients	Aristotle, pkt; Augustine, pkt.
9 Sept.	Virtue among the Moderns	Pieper, pkt.; MacIntyre, pkt.	11 Sept.	Civil Society: philosophic heritage	H & F, chs. 1-3
16 Sept.	Civil Society: Anglo-American Enlightenment	H & F, chs. 4-6	18 Sept.	Tocqueville on civil society	Tocq, pp. 264-88, 403-10
23 Sept.	Tocqueville on civil society	Tocq, pp. 417-28, 479-511	25 Sept.	Civil Society: recent ideas	H & F, chs. 19-22
30 Sept.	Aristotle on civil discourse	Aristotle, excerpts	2 Oct.	Aristotle on civil discourse	Aristotle, excerpts
7 Oct.	Public Discourse: the need	R & S, Intro. & chs. 1-2	9 Oct.	Public Discourse: leadership	R & S, chs. 8, 10, 11
14 Oct.	Public Discourse: principles & approaches	R & S, chs. 14, 16, 17	16 Oct.	Fall Free Days	

<sup>1</sup> Other readings are from the course packet.

<b>Practitioners on Virtue and Civil Discourse<sup>2</sup></b>	
Week of 19 Oct.	Visit with Shawnee area civic and political leaders
Week of 26 Oct.	Visit with Shawnee area media, NGO, and church leaders
Week of 2 Nov.	Visit with Oklahoma state civic and political leaders
Week of 9 Nov.	Visit with Oklahoma state media, NGO, and church leaders
Week of 16 Nov.	Visit with national and international civic and political leaders
Week of 23 Nov.	Visit with national and international media, NGO, and church leaders
Week of 30 Nov.	Final group presentation: audience from the OBU and Shawnee communities
<b>Thurs., 11 Dec.</b>	<b>Journal and final individual response due in my office by 5:00 p.m.</b>

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ETC.: I follow OBU policies regarding disabilities, academic honesty, incompletes, limited activity days, attendance (FX = 7 absences), and electronics. See the separate handout [http://www.okbu.edu/academics/syllabus\\_attachment - fall 2014.pdf](http://www.okbu.edu/academics/syllabus_attachment_-_fall_2014.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> Actual visits will depend upon availability and schedules of selected groups and the cost of transportation and accommodations for students.

### Select Recommended Supplemental Readings

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. *The Civil Sphere*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Baehr, Jason. *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Bellah, Robert N., et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.
- Carter, Stephen L. *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy*. New York: Basic Books, 1998.
- Davetian, Benet. *Civility: A Cultural History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Eberly, Don E., ed. *The Essential Civil Society Reader: The Classic Essays*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.
- Edwards, Michael. *Civil Society*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.
- Ehrenberg, John R. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and Charles R. Pinches. *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.
- Herbst, Susan. *Rude Democracy: Civility and Incivility in American Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Morton, Adam. *Bounded Thinking: Intellectual Virtues for Limited Agents*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Murphy, Nancey, Brad J Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds. *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after Macintyre*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.
- Pieper, Josef. *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. Trans. Richard Winston et al. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.
- Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
- Russell, Daniel C. *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009.
- Volf, Miroslav, and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- Wallis, Jim. *On God's Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn't Learned about Serving the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2013.