

## HERTOG 2021 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

### THE BIBLE & POLITICS

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This seminar will explore the Biblical view of the human condition through a reading of Genesis, Exodus, and other selections. Fellows will reflect on questions of freedom and law, peoples and nations, and how these unite in the foundational story of the Israelites.

This seminar will meet from **2 PM to 5 PM ET** on **July 19–23, 2021**.

#### Course Materials

- *The Five Books of Moses*, trans. Robert Alter (W. W. Norton & Co., 2004)
- Supplemental Readings of *Psalms*

#### Resources:

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Relevant pages include [Leon Kass](#).

**NOTE:** Please read *Genesis* entire **before the course**; while the sessions will focus on *Exodus*, you should have a comfortable familiarity with both from the first meeting.

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#### Monday, July 19, 2021

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**2 PM – 5 PM ET**

**Session I: Israel in Egypt**

#### Readings:

- *Genesis* 37–50 (broadly)
- *Exodus* 1–7:13 (closely)

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How does Israel come to be involved with Egypt? What are Egypt's governing principles and laws? What are the origins of Israel's (eventual) servitude?

2. Who is Moses? Who is Aaron? In what ways do they occupy distinct but complementary roles?
3. Who is the Lord? How does He declare Himself? How can Moses relate to Him?

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## Tuesday, July 20, 2021

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**2 PM – 5 PM ET**

### **Session II: Turning Plague into Song**

#### **Readings:**

- *Exodus* 7:14–15:21
- *Psalms* 105 (especially for Question 3)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the Lord's "signs and portents"? What do they exhibit and how, in each case and in their order?
2. Why and how does Israel's deliverance from Egypt help consolidate them as a people?
3. How is Moses' song (15:1-21) connected to the task of founding?

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## Wednesday, July 21, 2021

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**2 PM – 5 PM ET**

### **Session III: The Ten Words (Decalogue)**

#### **Readings:**

- *Exodus* 15:22–20

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean for Israel to make a covenant with God? (Please revisit *Genesis* 9, 15, 17 for comparison.) What is new here?
2. What is a law or "commandment" in the context of *Exodus* 20?
3. What can we see about God, man, Israel, and the relationships between these agents from this passage?

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**Thursday, July 22, 2021**

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**2 PM – 5 PM ET**

**Session IV: Laws & Dwelling**

**Readings:**

- *Exodus* 21–31
- *Leviticus* 18–19

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean for these laws to establish Israel as a “holy nation” (19:6)? What is “holy” and what is “national” here? (Please look at *Leviticus* 18–19 too.)
2. What are the laws in 21–24 – are they a sufficient, literal, conclusive body of regulations? Or are they exemplary and didactic (i.e., examples of the general *kinds* of statutes Israel should have)? Or should we read them in an altogether different way? What do they emphasize or not?
3. What is the Lord’s relationship to the Tabernacle? Is the Tabernacle for Israel or for the Lord?

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**Friday, July 23, 2021**

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**2 PM – 5 PM ET**

**Session V: Ruin & Restore**

**Readings:**

- *Exodus* 32–40
- *Psalms* 95 & 106 (especially for Question 2)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How should we understand the people’s fashioning of the Calf? Why do they do it, and what is its connection to the fashioning of the Tabernacle?
2. How should we understand the theme of rebellion and disobedience generally throughout *Exodus*? Is there a desire for slavery?
3. How does the Lord’s Presence develop throughout *Exodus* (cf. 13:21–2, 24:15–18, 40:34–38)? How is this development related to the development of Israel as a people?

**Concluding Questions:**

1. Why is the Lord involved with Israel and/or human beings at all? Is the Lord in history?

2. Is Israel a people by the end of *Exodus*? What is a people? Does every people have or embody its own law? Or does *Exodus* manifest the connection between people and law in a unique or special way?
3. What is the connection between a people and their foundation? Are there better and worse foundations? What is the relation between freedom, foundation, and law?