

Millennialism and Philosophies of History in Western Culture

Govt. 471: 001 (Cross-listed as Hist. 389:008)

Fall 2011, M/W 12-1:15, East Building Room 134

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Focusing on Western political society, this seminar surveys changing views about the meaning of human existence in time. We begin by trying to understand this issue before there was such an idea as “the West” or “civilization.” From that starting point, we go on to consider how, under the influence of Jewish and Christian worldviews, this search for historical meaning came to lay special emphasis on what is called the millennial (or chiliastic) perspective. We then explore the profound implications of this perspective for the deep currents of political development in Europe, America and the modern view of “global progress.”

This is a survey course. It does not assume any specialized historical or philosophical knowledge on the student’s part. The aim is to seek an understanding appropriate to the “liberal education” of an undergraduate in a 21st century university devoted to “higher learning.”

Readings: This is a course in which you will have to exercise and develop your reading skills. Otherwise, the seminar discussions will mean little to you.

We will read most of three books: Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*; R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*; Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, vol. II*. These books are available in the bookstore, but you would be wise to shop for low-cost copies. For example, there are roughly two dozen copies of the Collingwood book available for under \$7 on the internet (abebooks.com)

Please note: many reading assignments are NOT in these books. From the syllabus you will see that you are also responsible for additional (usually short) reading assignments which will be handed out in class, or sent to you via e-mail, or are on e-reserve at the Library. Your password for using this e-reserve material is “washington.”

Expectations: As members of our seminar—professor and students alike—we are under a mutual obligation to:

- 1) appear punctually for the class meetings;
- 2) prepare conscientiously by reading and studying the assigned material,
- 3) communicate with respect, honesty and intellectual seriousness of purpose

No formal record of attendance will be kept, but it will be difficult to receive a passing grade in this course without attending the meetings each week. “Seminar Participation” (see below) is not intended to mean you are under pressure to have something to say at every meeting. It means you are being evaluated on how seriously you engage in the seminar work every week throughout the semester. There is such a thing as “active listening.”

Should medical conditions or other responsibilities make it impossible for you to take an examination or complete an assignment on the scheduled date, you must inform me in advance. Unless you have received permission before or (in the case of an emergency) on that scheduled date, there will be no opportunity for make-up work. Voice mail is available to you at the number above, as is my e-mail address. If we fail to speak in person, be sure to leave a message.

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11-12 in Room 207 of the East Building. If you cannot come to my office during these times, please contact me so that we can arrange a mutually convenient time.

Evaluation and Course Grade: Instead of a research paper or formal final examination there will be three “learning stations.” These are regularly-spaced points in the course where you will be asked to report on your developing understanding of the material we have studied up to that date. Each report will take the form of a written response to a few key questions. These reports will be written at home but reviewed and discussed in class. Your final course grade will be based on the cumulative result of these five learning station reports and your responsible participation in the seminar. **Be sure to keep a hard copy of each report that you hand in.**

<u>Specifications for each learning station report:</u> <u>Length:</u> minimum 500 words; no maximum.
<u>Margins:</u> 1 inch. <u>Font:</u> 12 point, Times New Roman. <u>Justification:</u> left and right margins.
<u>Spacing:</u> single. <u>Grammatical Standard:</u> Strunk and White, <i>The Elements of Style</i>

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Philosophies of History: The Religious Point of Departure

1. **Mon. Aug.29** Introduction: What is a “philosophy of history”?
 -Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, extracts from chapters 1 & 6.
 (e-mailed to you August 15). Pay special attention to pages 6 to 9
 -Lin Yutang, “Chinese Humanism” (e-mailed to you August 15)
 -Richard Niebuhr, (one-page, in-class hand-out)

2. **Wed. Aug.31** -Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, “Introduction,” pp.1-13
 -Lowith, *Meaning in History*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-19
 -In class exercise: Using only your own powers of personal observation, answer this question: “As I come to class today, where are we in time?”

Mon. Sept. 5 Labor Day—No Class

In the Circles of Time: Man, Nature and Time before “Civilization”

3. **Wed. Sept. 7** -Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, extracts, chapters 1-4. (e-mailed to you)
 -Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, extract, pp.1-6 (e-reserve)

4. **Mon. Sept.12** -Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, pp.1-15.
 -Clifford Geertz, on “Religion and Culture” (e-mailed to you)
 -DVD—The Pueblo Indians of Chaco Canyon (shown in class)

5. **Wed. Sept.14** - Radhakrishnan, “Personal Experience of God” in Stewart, pp. 16-27 (SCAN and e-mail).
 -Thomas Howard, “The Old Myth and the New” (e-mailed to you)

The View from Ancient Civilizations

6. **Mon. Sept.19** Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Vedic Indian and Zoroastrian Cultures (material given to different students from Norman Cohn’s, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*)

Hand out First Learning Station Report

7. **Wed. Sept.21** Greco-Roman Culture
 -Collingwood, Part I. Greco-Roman Historiography, pp.14-45.
 -Summary of Hellenistic Doctrines (e-mailed to you)
 -Cassirer on Stoicism, *The Myth of the State* pp.97-105 (e-reserve)
 -Stoicism- extracts from Hadas and Marcus Aurelius (e-mailed to you)

The Jewish Origins of Universal, Providential History

8. **Mon.Sept.26** -DVD, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews: Episodes 1&2* “A People is Born” and “The Power of the Word”

Hand in First Learning Station Report

9. Wed. Sept.28 -Dawson, "The Dynamics of World History" (scan and e-mail)
 -Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, extract, pp.6-11 (e-reserve)
 -Franz Rosenzweig, extracts from *The Star of Redemption* (e-reserve)
10. Mon. Oct. 3 -Cohn, *Cosmos and Chaos*, chapter 8, "Exile and After" (e-reserve)
 -Martin Buber, Two Hasidic stories (e-mailed to you)
11. Wed. Oct. 5 -Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, pp.15-67

Incarnational History : the Christian Prolepsis

12. Mon. Oct. 10 -Lowith, *Meaning in History*, chapter 11, pp. 182-90
 -Dawson, "Dynamics of World History (The Christian View of History) (e-reserve)
 -Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp.46-52
13. Wed. Oct. 12 -David Hart, "Antiquity and Christianity" (e-reserve)
 -Hill, "Why the Early Church Finally Rejected Pre-millennialism (e-reserve)
 -Chart on Millennialism (class hand-out)
 -Michael Horton, "Paul's Two Ages vs. Plato's Two Worlds" (e-reserve)
 -Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, "The [Christian] Possibilities and Limits of History," pp. 68-97
14. Mon. Oct. 17 -Lowith, *Meaning in History*, chapter 9, pp.160-73
 -Augustine, read chapters 4-10 from Book 20, *The City of God* (on e-reserve, but listed under "Robert Hutchins")

Hand out Second Learning Station Report

15. Wed. Oct. 19 -Timothy George, "Love Amidst the Brokenness" (scan and e-mail)
 -Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, "The [Christian] Possibilities and Limits of History," pp. 98-129

Disintegration of the Western Theology of History

16. Mon.Oct.24 **Medieval Stirrings**
 -Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp.52-56
 -Lowith, *Meaning in History* chap. 8 and appendix I, pp.145-59 and 208-13
 -Niebuhr, *The Nature & Destiny of Man*, 'Medieval Catholic Synthesis,' pp.127-148.

Hand in Second Learning Station Report

17. Wed. Oct.26 **The Renaissance**
 -Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp.57-58
 -Dawson, "Dynamics of World History (The Kingdom of God & History)" (e-reserve)
 -Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 'Destruction of the Catholic Synthesis' and 'The Renaissance,' pp. 148-183

18. Mon. Oct.31 The Reformation

- Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 'The Reformation,' pp. 184-212
- Tuveson, "The Rationale of the Millennium" pp.26 to-middle of 39 and bottom of p.46 to 51 (e-reserve)

19. Wed. Nov. 2 Political Millennialism Unleashed

- Cohn, "The Pursuit of the Millennium (Egalitarian Millennium)" (e-reserve)
- Wainwright, "Mysterious Apocalypse (The Revival of Millennialism)" (e-reserve)

20. Mon. Nov.7 The Enlightenment

- Collingwood, *The Idea of History* pp.59-85.
- Lowith, *Meaning in History*, , "Vico," chapter 6, and "Voltaire," chapter 5.
- Charles Taylor, "Political Messianism" (2 pages e-mailed to you)

Millennialism Transformed into Modern Secular Political Ideologies**21. Wed. Nov. 9 German Romanticism and Universal History**

- Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp.86-122
- Lowith, *Meaning in History*, chapter 3, pp.52-59

22. Mon. Nov. 14 The Ideology of Progress

- Lowith, chapter 4, pp.60-103
- Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp.122-133
- Article on Madach and Progress, *The Economist*, Dec.17, 2009 (e-mailed to you)

23. Wed. Nov. 16 Marxism

- Lowith, *Meaning in History*, chapter 2, pp. 33-51
- Gardiner, *Theories of History*, (Materialist Conception of History) (e-reserve)

24. Mon. Nov. 21 American Millennialism

- Lienesch, "The Role of Political Millennialism in American Nationalism" (e-reserve)
- Bellah, "American Civil Religion" (e-mailed to you)
- President Reagan's address to the British Parliament, 1982
<http://www.iri.org/learn-more-about-iri/history/reagans-speech-parliament>
- President Barack Obama, First Inaugural Address
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>

- **Wed. Nov.23** No Class in honor of Thanksgiving Day

25. Mon. Nov.28 -President George W. Bush's Second Inaugural Address

- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172>
- Daniel Mahoney, "Conservatism, Democracy, and Foreign Policy" (e-mailed to you)
- Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order* (Scan extracts for e-reserve)

Hand out Third Learning Station Report**26. Wed. Nov. 30** -Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, chapter 10, pp. 287-321

-Lowith, *Meaning in History*, Chapter 1, Conclusion, & Epilogue, pp.20-32, 191-207

27. Mon. Dec. 5 -Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, “Second Epilogue”

<http://www.classicauthors.net/tolstoy/warandpeac/warandpeac355.html>

Hand in Third Learning Station Report

ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated severely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task to the best of your ability. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The “Mason Alert” system provides emergency information of various sorts. I encourage you to be part of this system. Do so by signing up at the website: <https://alert.gmu.edu>. You should also be aware that an emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures exists on <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert> .

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

- WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>
- UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES “Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

- COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>
- UNIVERSITY POLICIES
The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.