RST 10 - Contemporary Ethical Issues:
The Ethics of Religion in Politics

CRN: 53513
Instructor: Baki Tezcan
Meeting times: MW 10-10:50
Meeting place: 2 Wellman
Lecture – 2 hours; 2 credits
GE credit: AH W | AH WE

Would the Buddha take a government job?
Did Moses believe in democracy?
Would Jesus vote?
What would Muhammad do?
Should their opinions on politics matter for us?
Who has the authority to tell us what exactly they would say on any of this?

Rather than teaching a “lesson,” this course aims to expose students to various combinations of politics and religion throughout history with a view to raise an awareness of the ethical problems that these combinations created.

Throughout the spring quarter, the students in this class will reflect on the ethical implications of religion in politics as they are listening to lectures on such varied topics as a Buddhist monk at the Tang court; the Covenant of the Old Testament; Rome vs. the Christians; Constantine, Christianity, and the Roman Empire; the Zoroastrian order of the world; a Muslim discussion on the social utility of prophets; the Crusades; the Christianization of Spain; Sunni-Shiite political rivalry in the early modern Islamic world; religion in early American history; secularism; Osama bin Laden’s audiotapes; the Zionist movement; and modern Turkish politics.

Textbook: None; the readings will be posted on SmartSite.
Grading: Essays (altogether 5 pages), 80 %; quizzes, 20 %.

The image on the upper right hand side is taken from the cover of Jeff Sharlet, C Street: The Fundamentalist Threat to American Democracy (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010), illustration: Adam Auerbach. The other image was found on a blog called “American Muslim,” http://ashadu.blogspot.com on January 10, 2015.