“We are informed by the texts of the gospels that in this Church and in its power are two swords; namely, the spiritual and the temporal...the former is to be administered for the Church but the latter by the Church; the former in the hands of the priest; the latter by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the will and sufferance of the priest.”

-Pope Boniface VIII, Unam Sanctam (1302)

“If norms are established by the intelligent and best minds of a dynasty, the result will be a political institution on a rational basis. If they are ordained by God through a prophet who establishes them as religious laws, the result will be a political institution on a religious basis, which will be useful for life in this and the other world. This is because the purpose of human beings is not only their worldly welfare, for this entire world is trifling and futile.”

-Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah (1377)

Course Description: This course is all about power. Who bears it? What legitimizes its exercise? In what arenas can it be enacted? What limitations can be placed upon it? In answering these questions, we will primarily examine the relationship between political leadership and religious authority in two traditions, Christianity and Islam, and will focus on the first millennium of their existence, from roughly 200CE-1500CE. The focus of this historical investigation will be to see how dynamics of collaboration, subordination, cooptation, and conflict have shaped these traditions, and how the institutions and texts that shaped their origins continue to exert influence in our contemporary world. Our proximate goal for this course will be to use the comparison between Christian and Islamic polities, as well as among the kingdoms and empires of those traditions, to determine whether or not a normative and/or ideal relationship between secular and sacred authorities in the medieval and early modern world existed. We will also seek to construct a working vocabulary for talking about how the tension and ambiguities within these traditions concerning sacred and secular ends continue to exercise influence in the twenty-first century.

Course Structure: This course is structured as a hybrid lecture and discussion; class meetings will feature lectures that, along with the course’s secondary readings, frame the essential issues. The course will also require student participation, as we will spend considerable time discussing primary sources and images. In some weeks we will have discussions during both class meetings; in others, we will spend one day in lecture and the second meeting in a discussion. The syllabus reflects these differences, but please be prepared to discuss the materials listed for each specific
class! This course is reading intensive – reading will average a bit over 100 pages per week, and will require more reading on certain weeks. For class discussions, however, we will focus on the primary sources – please be sure to have access to them in class for the purpose of our discussions.

**Course Requirements:** Because of the structure of this course, attendance is essential for students’ success. If students know they will miss a class, they should inform the instructor ASAP to find out about missed assignments. Class participation is graded, so be aware that absences will affect your final grade.

Beyond attendance/participation, students will be evaluated based on three components: two papers (4-6pp.), due on **March 7** and **April 16**; and a take-home final exam, due on **May 8**.

Assignments are weighted as follows:

- Class participation: 20%
- Paper #1: 25%
- Paper #2: 25%
- Final exam: 30%

**Required Texts:** There are four texts required for the class; they are available at the Barnes and Noble in Kenmore Square, and are also for sale online:


Besides these required texts, there are many additional readings available through Blackboard (in the course’s “Content” section). You will need to consult the class Blackboard page routinely to check for assignments and readings. I will alert students about assignments and additional information as it appears on Blackboard; students will therefore be responsible for all materials that appear on the course site.

**Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and abide by the spirit and letter of Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code ([http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code)). Any breaches of the Code or instances of academic dishonesty will result in prescribed disciplinary action and a failing grade for the course.
Course Schedule and Readings

Note: Readings marked [BB] in the syllabus are available on the course Blackboard site. All other readings come from required course texts or identified websites.

1/22 and 1/24: Ancient Foundations – This week’s classes will cover the expectations and mechanics of the course, as well as include an initial discussion of key terms and a consideration of Old Testament notions of kingship and its relation to the divine.


Part I: Christian Theo-Politics – An Essential Ambivalence

1/29 & 1/31: My Kingdom is Not of This World? – For this week, we will discuss Old and New Testament attitudes towards the divine, kingship, and a religious person’s obligations to secular society. We will also ask an essential question: how does a community square continued persecution with the concept of divine election?


2/5 & 2/7: Towards a Christian Empire – What happens when a martyred outlaw becomes linked with the religion of empire? During this week we will analyze the adoption of Christianity by the bulk of the Roman Empire, which culminated in the “conversion” of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, along with some initial responses to Christianity’s newly “providential” place in Roman culture.


2/12 & 2/14: The Two Cities – Despite the changes brought about by Constantine’s conversion, not all Christians eagerly embraced their newly cozy relationship with worldly power. In this week we will focus on St. Augustine and his massively influential account of the Christian’s place in secular society, which sought to completely divorce the religious from the political community.

**Readings:** R.A. Markus, *Saeculum* [BB]; St. Augustine of Hippo, Selections from *The City of God* and Sermon on the Sacking of Rome [BB].
2/21: Christian Kingship as Synthesis (NO CLASS 2/19) – In the five hundred years after the fall of Rome, a distinctive style of Christian kingship developed in the ideological space between Eusebius’s panegyrics and Augustine’s skepticism. This week will focus on the development and dynamics of early medieval Christian kingship.


2/26 & 2/28: The Ecclesial Alternative – Even as distinctive European kingdoms came into existence, an international ecclesiastical structure developed alongside and around them. This class will explore the growth of the papal “monarchy” as a rival and complement to medieval political structures.

**Readings:** Miller, *Power and the Holy in the Age of the Investiture Controversy*, introduction and primary sources (TBA).

**Part II: Islam and Empire: The Fractured Ideal**

3/5: Muhammad and the Origins of the Umma (NO CLASS 3/7) – For the second section of the course, we will turn to the earliest period of Islamic history, beginning with the Prophet Muhammad’s mission and establishment of an Islamic society in which the notional boundaries between religious and political associations did not exist. The main question: how did this theoretical unity develop in practice?

**Readings:** Berkey, 57-90; Asma Afsaruddin, “Where Earth and Heaven Meet: Remembering Muhammad as Head of State” [BB]; *The Qu’ran: Surah 2 (The Cow), 30-46 and 246-257; Surah 21 (The Prophets); Surah 38 (Sad) (a searchable translation of the Qu’ran is available at: www.quranexplorer.com/quran).**

***PAPER #1 DUE AS EMAIL ATTACHMENT TO PROFESSOR BY 5PM ON 3/7***

3/12 & 3/14: SPRING BREAK

3/19 & 3/21: The Muslim Successor State – In this meeting we will trace out the solutions to a terrible quandary that faced Muslims in 632: how can you establish authority in a rapidly expanding empire when its irreplaceable founder dies? We will focus on strategies used to legitimize the exercise of power and the initial development of an Islamic “tradition” of political leadership.

**Readings:** Berkey, 91-129; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God’s Rule: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* [BB]; Documents on the early Caliphate from *A Reader in Classical Islam* [BB].
3/26 & 3/28: Shi’ism and the Imami Alternative – Almost from the very beginning of this development, however, alternatives existed. Was the Prophet’s charisma actually heritable? Did this inheritance make political authority dependent on religious power? In this class we will examine the origins of Shi’ite Islam and its answers to these questions.

Readings: Berkey, 130-151; Abdulaziz Sachedina, The Just Ruler in Shi’ite Islam [BB]; Documents on Shi’ism, from A Reader in Classical Islam [BB].

4/2 & 4/4: The Ideology of Imperial Islam – In these meetings we will examine the ideological and institutional establishment of a type of imperial Islam in which a delicate balance of religious authority and political power was achieved. We will chiefly examine whether or not this model was meant to be binding or permanent.

Readings: Berkey, 179-230; Anthony Black, History of Islamic Political Thought [BB]; Ali ibn Muhammad Mawardi, The Ordinances of Government [BB].

4/9 & 4/11: Assessing Islamic Empire – For our discussion this week we will focus on one of the great medieval historians, Ibn Khaldun, and his interpretation of Islamic history. His particular view on the foundations of power will serve as a capstone to our consideration of Islamic political theory in the tradition’s early history.


Part III: A History of Violence

4/16 & 4/18: jihad – One of the primary prerogatives of power is the right to wage war. Over the next two weeks, we will discuss the theories of legitimate violence that developed within the Christian and Islamic traditions. In our first week, we will look at the Islamic notion of jihad and its establishment as the “sixth pillar” of Islam.

Readings: Partner, 31-58 and 85-110; The Qu’ran: Surah 2 (The Cow), 183-218; Surah 3 (The Family of ‘Imran), 100-148; and Surah 9 (Repentance), 38-89.

***PAPER #2 DUE AS EMAIL ATTACHMENT TO PROFESSOR BY 5PM ON 4/16***
4/23 & 4/25: Just War – Christians have long debated whether or not Christians can legitimately wage war. During our meetings this week, we will explore the origins and development of a “just war” ideology among Christian leaders and its expansion into crusade ideology in the high Middle Ages.


4/30 & 5/2 A Clash of Civilizations? – Muslim and Christian views of warfare and the world collided in Jerusalem in 1099, as crusaders sought to take Jerusalem from the infidels and consequently created Christian states in the Near East. In our last meetings we will explore the ramification of this conflict for Christian and Muslim theopolitics.


***TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE TO PROFESSOR AS EMAIL ATTACHMENT BY 5PM ON MAY 8***