

Department of Politics
TTP Readings and Prompts

Franklin I. Gamwell, *Politics as a Christian Vocation: Faith and Democracy Today* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

- Many democratic citizens, including many Christians, think that separation of religion from the state means the exclusion of religious beliefs from the political process. That view is mistaken. Both democracy and Christian faith, this 2004 book shows, call all Christians to make their beliefs effective in politics. But the discussion here differs from others. Most have trouble relating religion to democratic discussion and debate because they assume that religious differences cannot be publicly debated. Against this majority view, this book argues that Christian faith belongs in politics because it shares with democracy a full commitment to rational pursuit of the truth. The book then develops ideals of justice and the common good Christians should advocate within the democratic process and shows the difference they make for contemporary politics in the United States, focusing specifically on issues of abortion, affirmative action, and economic distribution.

Matthew Carnes, "Contributions of Contemporary Political Science to an Understanding of the Common Good," in *Empirical Foundations of the Common Good*, Daniel K. Finn, ed. (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 7-35.

- The idea of the common good was borrowed by the Fathers of the early Catholic Church from the rich philosophical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. It has been a fundamental part of Catholic thinking about social, political, and economic life throughout the Catholic intellectual tradition, from Augustine and Aquinas to modern Catholic social thought in the encyclicals of popes in recent centuries. Yet this history has been rooted in the traditions of philosophy and theology. With the rise of the social sciences in the nineteenth century as distinct disciplines no longer limited to the methods of their philosophical origins, humanity has learned a great deal more about the human condition. *Empirical Foundations of the Common Good* asks two questions: what have the social sciences learned about the common good? How might theology alter its understanding of the common good in light of that insight?
- In this chapter, Matthew Carnes discusses how political science can supplement theological reflections on the common good.

Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), chapter 10 (pp. 245-69).

- "For Michael Sandel, justice is not a spectator sport," *The Nation's* reviewer of *Justice* remarked. In his acclaimed book—based on his legendary Harvard course—Sandel offers a rare education in thinking through the complicated issues and controversies we face in public life today. It has emerged as a most lucid and engaging guide for those who yearn for a more robust and thoughtful public discourse. "In terms we can all understand," wrote Jonathan Rauch in *The New*

York Times, Justice "confronts us with the concepts that lurk . . . beneath our conflicts."

- Affirmative action, same-sex marriage, physician-assisted suicide, abortion, national service, the moral limits of markets—Sandel relates the big questions of political philosophy to the most vexing issues of the day, and shows how a surer grasp of philosophy can help us make sense of politics, morality, and our own convictions as well.
- Chapter 10 (pp. 245-69) argues that we cannot and should not try to set aside our moral and religious convictions when considering the important political questions of our time.

Prompts:

1. To talk about politics and religion in polite company is often considered a serious breach of etiquette. But is there a sense in which not talking about them—or considering the ways in which they are related--impedes a community's pursuit of justice and the common good? In what ways can political science as a discipline contribute to our understanding of the common good – both substantively and methodologically?
2. Messiah's motto, "Christ Preeminent," reflects the belief that faith is relevant to every aspect of life. Drawing from the assigned readings, explain how you connect faith to the study of political science in either your teaching or your scholarship.