

European Political Thought in a Secular Age

Many thinkers have been pessimistic about the political consequences of secularization in Europe. In this course we will critically examine some of their arguments. We will begin with Max Weber's classic account of secularization and explore the impact that he believes secularism must have on political authority and legitimacy. For several weeks we will engage in a close reading of Charles Taylor's recent work, *A Secular Age*, in order to explore the basis of his own form of pessimism. And we will examine the arguments made by Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, Jürgen Habermas, and others, in support of the view that current European political values of a liberal democratic nature are necessarily dependent on a Judaeo-Christian worldview.

Required books:

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Parsons, Routledge, 2001; ISBN-10: 041525406X ISBN-13: 978-0415254069

Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Gerth and Mills, Oxford University Press, 1958; ISBN-10: 0195004620 ISBN-13: 978-0195004625

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007; ISBN-10: 0674026764 ISBN-13: 978-0674026766