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In this issue . . .

Ethics and Public Policy

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The purpose of this course is to introduce a new framework linking the humanities to public policy analysis as pursued in the government and the academy. Current efforts to link the particular contributions from the humanities to problems of public policy choice are often narrow either in terms of their perspective on the humanities or in terms of their selection of the possible means of influencing policy choice. Sometimes a single text from one of the humanities disciplines is selected to apply to a particular issue. At other times, arguments about the ethical dimensions of a single policy issue often are pursued with a single — or sometimes, no — point of access to the policy process in mind.

This course is designed to explore the multiplicity of potential contributions from several humanities to public policy evaluation at various stages in the democratic governing process. While not denying the merit of the more traditional approaches to the subject, the lack of a framework for linking the subject of ethics to the process of politics often limits one to analyses that are better received in the academy than in the public arena.

The course presented here attempts to attain the goals of the traditional courses in that the students achieve a sense of the complexity of ethical analysis and the extension of sensitivity to ethical options in political choices. Both goals having been identified as properties of such courses in Peter Stainfels, "The Place of Ethics in Schools of Public Policy," *Hastings Center Report*, (April, 1977). Moreover, one unexpected consequence of the course's focus on rhetoric and ethics has been that students report that they no longer can listen to political debates without separating political rhetoric from ethical argument. These goals were sought while, at the same time, students each pursued an individual study applying the analytic tools developed in the course to specific policy debates at a specific point in the governmental process.

The course, in attempting to deal with the direct and indirect contributions of the humanities in linking ethics to public policy evaluation, incorporated five distinct approaches (or themes) simultaneously, albeit with different emphases in different stages of presentation. These were layered into a single structure.

First, an overall framework for ethical and political discourse was developed from the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle extended by Stephen Toulmin's *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*. This framework is not employed to limit the treatment of modes of analysis within the humanities to ethical discourse. Rather, it is designed 1) to describe how different levels of meaning can be employed in policy evaluation, and 2) to clarify the differences in the potential arguments and understandings that are relevant at different stages of the political process. Moreover, the framework is important in clarifying parallels between the ways humanistic understanding and scientific understanding can be brought to bear upon policy evaluation. The role of audience, presumption, and rational versus symbolic persuasion proved to be the critical concepts in later applications to political rhetoric in the political process.

Second, the policy process as a whole was investigated to focus attention on the variety of access points at which ethical concerns can and do affect choices, with special attention to four stages within the process: 1) the publics and the *Public*; 2) the pregovernmental institutions (parties and interest groups); 3) the promulgation of policy (Congress and the President); and 4) the application of policy (administration and courts). The policy process was introduced as a general model and later explored in terms of the possibilities for each of the humanities having

New courses . . .

Biblical Politics

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Courses on political theory customarily start with the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who are rightfully considered the first great political philosophers in the western tradition. Complementing this theoretical discourse, the wartime politics of ancient Greece, stressing its military history and the beliefs and motives of its leaders, is masterfully rendered by Thucydides.

Why do we not study the politics or political theory of a more ancient tradition — that of the Israelites in their struggle for survival and supremacy, as captured in the Old Testament, particularly the Pentateuch/Torah? Perhaps because no great political theory, distinct from a religion and its precepts, is set forth in the Old Testament. Perhaps because no coherent historical view is evident in the diverse authorship, and different emphases and stylistic features, of the various books of the Old Testament, and even within individual books.

Whatever the reason for the neglect of the Bible in political theory and politics courses, the politics in the Bible is inescapable. By politics I mean roughly the rational calculation of advantage and disadvantage by people in situations of conflict, which I would argue is endemic in most of the great Old Testament stories we know from our religious — not our political science — training.

EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL GAMES

Let me illustrate this proposition by considering choices that various biblical characters in the Old Testament faced as they tried to cope with circumstances that threatened their welfare or even very existence:

1. Should Eve accept the argument of the serpent that she would become divine by eating the forbidden fruit, or should she take seriously the threat of God, whose sanctions had never