

# **The Student Syllabus – America - The Covenant Nation (The three-volume series)**

Questions to consider in doing the readings

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## **Volume One – Securing America's Covenant with God**

Preface and Introduction - pp. ix-5

How does history show us that the moral character of a society's leadership is so important to a society's rise to greatness ... and its decline if that moral character is lost? How is it that America itself has always been divided between two contending moral codes? Which moral code was Winthrop seeking to see established with the settlement of New England? Why did he refer to this moral code as a "covenant" ... and what was exactly the nature of that covenant? Where do things seem to stand today with respect to America's moral code?

Chapter 1 - pp. 6-56 (Colonial Foundations)

How is it that the Virginia and New England settlements represented this same moral division? How does Western society in general differ from the other major moral codes of the world ... such as the Hindu and Buddhist variety? What role did ancient Jewish, Greek and Roman society play in the development of the Western social order? How did Jesus bring a very different understanding to life ... and its general purpose? What happened to Jesus's Christian legacy when it stopped being persecuted and finally became accepted – even "Romanized" – by Roman authorities? How did a rising urban (city) society change the very character of the West's "medieval" social order? How was it that Calvin took the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s even more deeply into social-moral reform than had Luther? Why was such Protestantism considered by many to be a grave danger to Christian Europe? What was it that the "Puritans" were attempting to achieve in terms of social reform in England? How was "natural philosophy" (modern science) born out of a desire to be more "reasonable" about life ... and its (supposedly) rather mechanical dynamics?

In what ways were the Spanish, French and Dutch also involved in "Europeanizing" the Americas? What was the intended purpose of the Virginia settlement ... and how was its startup? How did Virginia tend to imitate Europe's older feudal order? Why did Berkeley have such a problem with Bacon and his supporters? What was "indenture" ... and why was this replaced by the widespread use of slavery in Virginia?

Why did English "Separatists" come to New England as "Pilgrims"? Why did thousands of English Puritans soon join them in this venture? Why was Winthrop so very vital to the success of this critical venture? In what ways was New England so very different from Virginia? How did New England have its own distinct challenges facing its survival and development ... especially in the realm of human egos? What was the nature of the relations between the English settlers and the Indians?

Chapter 2 - pp. 57-90 (The Colonies Mature)

What was the purpose and general character of the Maryland colony? What was happening in England in the mid-1600s that would impact the development of the American colonies? What was the purpose and general character of the Carolina colony? The Dutch New Netherland colony? James's New York and New Jersey? Penn's Pennsylvania?

How and why would the religious fervor of the early-to-mid 1600s both in England and in the American colonies find itself being replaced by a very Secular or Humanist belief that human reason alone (human "Enlightenment") would do a better job at directing social progress? Where did that leave the Puritan

spirit in America as it moved from the 1600s into the 1700s?

How did the "feudal order" of Virginia continue to develop in the 1700s? What was behind the establishment of the Georgia colony? How was it that a "Great Awakening" of the Christian spirit suddenly exploded in America in the 1730s-1750s? Why was this historically such a significant event?

### Chapter 3 - pp. 91-123 (Independence)

What was America's role in the French and Indian War? How did England's Hanoverian kings at first give America a lot of freedom to develop ... and then have all that changed under George III? Why were the Americans so reactive? What pushed Boston to the lead in the reaction? What was the role of the Second Continental Congress in the conflict? What were the key developments both in Congress and on the battlefield in the later 1770s? Why was Washington so vital to the American effort? Why did the British finally move their action to the American South? How did things turn out there for the British ... especially at Yorktown?

### Chapter 4 - pp. 124-158 (The Birth of the American Republic)

What determined the Framers of the American Constitution to build on well-established American political-moral habits, rather than on a new or "revolutionary" form of government? Why was it necessary for Franklin to remind fellow Framers to build their work on what they all knew was God's work ... and not their own political self-interests so rationally presented (they were mostly lawyers by trade) – which was getting them nowhere. What exactly was the form of government they came up with ... and what were the guarantees that it would work - that is, not allow power to result eventually in some kind of political tyranny?

### Chapter 5 - pp. 159-194 (The Young Republic)

How and why did Washington set a key precedent in terms of the length of presidential service? What did Hamilton do to put the dollar and the federal government on strong economic foundations? Why did Jefferson differ politically so deeply with Washington and Hamilton ... and what did he do to counter their political positions? Why was he so completely wrong about the dynamics of the French Revolution? How did John Adams fare as US president? What were Jefferson's various policies and programs as US president? What did John Marshall do as Supreme Court Chief Justice to award power to his federal court ... power not specifically assigned to the court by the US Constitution? Why did America declare war against Britain in 1812 ... and how did things go for America in that war?

### Chapter 6 - pp. 195-232 (The Shaping of a Nation)

How was it that America ended up owning Florida? How did Henry Clay hope to defuse the rising North-South dispute over slavery with his "Missouri Compromise"? What was the real meaning of the "Monroe Doctrine"? In what ways was Andrew Jackson so very different from his predecessor as US president, John Quincy Adams? What and why was the "Indian Removal" of the 1830s? What was the economic panic and depression of the late 1830s all about? What was so unique about America ... according to the thinking of the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville? What was happening that was moving America forward as a very strong industrial society?

How did rising Unitarians (and Humanists) – individuals such as Jefferson, Owen, Emerson, etc. – find themselves up against a very strong "Awakening" Christian spirit in America?→ Who were the key individuals responsible for this "Second Great Awakening"? What were some of the more unusual religious varieties birthed by this same Awakening? How did this Awakening also inspire huge Christian missionary and educational programs?

### Chapter 7 - pp. 233-258 (Expansion ... and Division)

What did O'Sullivan mean by the term "Manifest Destiny"? How was it that Texas came to be such a big part of that expansive instinct ... and what were the consequences politically for America? How is it that

Oregon, California, and other Western territories also got pulled into this American expansion? But how did this also complicate further the growing unrest in America over the issue of slavery ... and the growing North-South political-cultural division?

#### Chapter 8 - pp. 259-276 (The Gathering Clouds of War)

Why did the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 fail horribly to resolve the growing North-South bitterness over the slavery issue? Why did Taney's Supreme Court Dred Scott Decision of 1857 only make the situation worse? In what ways was Lincoln definitely not the "country bumpkin" that other, more "sophisticated," American leaders at first consider him to be? Why did he ask his political critics to become part of his presidential cabinet? What was it indeed that made Lincoln one of America's greatest presidents (some would even say the greatest of all!)? Why did his election to the presidency trigger the American Civil War?

#### Chapter 9 - pp. 277-303 (Civil War)

Why was finding the right military leader such a deep challenge to Lincoln in the first years of the war? How was it that the Battle of Gettysburg almost ended the Civil War ... but ultimately didn't? What was it that distinguished Grant from the other Union generals? How was it that the battles in southern Tennessee and northwestern Georgia seemed to mark a turning point in the war? How was 1864 a time of deep Southern military setbacks ... and early 1865 the end of the Confederacy? How was the assassination of Lincoln a huge tragedy not only for the North but also for the South?

#### Chapter 10 - pp. 304-327 (America Recovers)

Why was Johnson unable to hold off the intense spirit of anti-South revenge coming from the Republican Radicals? How was it that Grant proved to not be as high quality a president that he had been as a general? How did the end of the Civil War now open up a rush westward ... into the remaining Indian territories?

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### **Volume Two – America's Rise to Greatness under God's Covenant**

#### Chapter 1 - pp. 1-25 (The "Gilded Age" of American Capitalism)

What made the "Captains of American Industry" (or "American Robber Barons" as others termed them) so incredibly wealthy? What were the key elements of the American Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s ... and how did such material development overshadow the realm of American national politics? How did this industrial momentum continue right on into the early 20th century? How did all this material development inspire a growing spirit of "Progressivism"?

#### Chapter 2 - pp. 26-46 (American Progressivism)

In what key ways did Jane Addams, William Jennings Bryan, Teddy Roosevelt and Howard Taft have such a positive moral impact on these changing times? But what was the impact of the rising Rationalism or Humanism of the times (but reaching back even into the 1700s) on the Christian moral-spiritual legacy of both America and the larger Western world? How did the romanticizing of this new secular spirit inspire a rising and quite militant spirit of social tribalism ... or "nationalism"? How did the very idea of deep struggle against life's adversities inspire even further this spirit of social militancy?

#### Chapter 3 - pp. 47-92 (The Rationalizing of Western Culture)

In what ways was Marx a strong Humanist or Social Idealist ... but one very opposed to the rising spirit of nationalism that seemed to inspire so strongly the Western world's industrial working class? In what ways did Lenin revise Marx's "Communism" to fit the Russian social context? How did America itself get caught up in the Humanism of the times ... with its revising of the Constitution in such a way that made

it more "democratic" – undercutting the checks and balances system originally built into the Constitution (originally designed to keep power from accumulating in one or other of America's several political institutions)? How was it that Wilson exemplified this very spirit of "Democratic Humanism"? How did this spirit finally take on the label "Liberalism" ... in the sense of "liberating" people from what exactly? How did Dewey and Holmes give intellectual justification for this new spirit of "Liberalism"? How did all of this impact American Christianity?

#### Chapter 4 - pp. 93-132 (Nationalism, Imperialism and The Great War)

How did this rising spirit of nationalism inspire deeply the global "imperialism" that so consumed Western society in the latter part of the 1800s? What role did America play in this Age of Imperialism? But how did the lack of more territory overseas to grab for nationalist purposes (nearly all of the world had been placed under Western control or "protection" by the end of the 1800s) now force this spirit to play in a world way too close to the European homeland itself ... mostly the neighboring lands still held by the Turkish Empire? How did this finally push the European powers in 1914 into a pointless war (The Great War or World War One) right there in the European heartland? Why did it simply drag on – to no great purpose – except mutual slaughter? How did this finally bring on the Russian Revolution? How did this in turn inspire an intellectually self-blinded Wilson to get involved in this tragic war? What were the ultimate results for America and Europe when sheer exhaustion finally brought things to an end?

#### Chapter 5 - pp. 133-162 (The "Roaring Twenties")

Why do we say that things "roared" in the 1920s? How did America seem to divide into "two Americas": a depressed rural America ... and a partying urban America? How did all of this impact the spirit and soul of the two Americas? What role did presidential leadership play in all of this? How did America decide to approach the rest of the world – and its problems – in the 1920s? Why did the dictatorships of Stalin and Mussolini seem to be a natural part of the post-war dynamic ... and what exactly did their regimes represent politically? What finally brought the urban "partying" in America to an end?

#### Chapter 6 - pp. 163-199 (Depression and Dictatorship)

What exactly did Franklin Roosevelt have in mind with his "New Deal"? What were the immediate benefits of all his government programs? How was this economic depression matched with a moral-spiritual depression in America? How did the Idealism of the Humanists at first cause them to believe that they had discovered a new religion – a "Religious Humanism" – that would save America spiritually (and materially)? But why did Roosevelt's New Deal ultimately fail to bring America out of its economic depression? What was it exactly that finally did the job? How did this depression impact American Christianity ... and in what ways did Christian America seek to restore its broken world?

What was the supposed appeal of the European dictators – Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini? Why was "appeasement" by Chamberlain supposedly the correct program in dealing with these dictators? In what ways was the Spanish Civil War a dry run on another world war? What did America do in response to developments in China, Austria and Czechoslovakia?

#### Chapter 7 - pp. 200-236 (World War Two)

Why would Stalin agree to a treaty with Germany dividing Eastern Europe between the Russian and German powers? Why did only a "Sitzkrieg" result as a result of the Russian-German aggression? What then were Hitler's intentions in turning his aggression westward? Why then did he have to go East ... towards Russia? What finally brought America into the war? How did the American conflict with the Japanese at first go in the Pacific and East Asia? What was Gandhi's response to the new Asian dynamic?

Why was North Africa chosen as the starting point of an American-British attack against the German-Italian alliance? Why was the action in Italy so difficult ... and what happened at Anzio? Why was the Russian stand at Stalingrad so important? Why did the Western allies choose to move from their Normandy landing towards Paris rather than straight east towards Germany? What happened to the effort to swing into Germany from the Dutch North? Why did Roosevelt believe that Stalin's intentions

were purely defensive – rather than strongly aggressive – in the Russian conduct of the war in the European East? Why was Truman such a different president than Roosevelt? What action by Truman finally ended the war with Japan?

#### Chapter 8 - pp. 237-268 (A Cold War Develops)

Who ended up occupying what areas of the world as part of the post-war "occupation"? How did it become increasingly clear that Stalin had no intentions of letting go of his grip on East Europe? What did Truman do to help block the efforts of Stalin's Communists in Greece and Turkey ... and in their attempts to take control of Western Europe? How did events in Czechoslovakia wake up the general American populace to the serious danger of Stalin's Communist program? How did Truman take the lead in the West in opposing Stalin ... in Yugoslavia, in Berlin, and in the creation of NATO? How did a broader effort by America to "democratize" the world tend to throw confusion rather than peaceful development into various situations in the post-war world ... starting with Dutch Indonesia? What was the net outcome of Gandhi's (and British Prime Minister Atlee's) efforts to finish off all British authority in India? Why did China fall into civil war at the same time? And how did the release of the Jews that survived the German death camps mean that the Palestinians (Muslim, Christian and Jewish) were about to find their homeland under massive European Jewish invasion? Why was the situation in French Indo-China so confusing at war's end?

#### Chapter 9 - pp. 269-321 (Middle America Comes of Age)

How did America's Veterans (or "Vets") of the recent war now find themselves facing new social dynamics – such as a nervous labor movement, their own "Baby Boom," their post-war Christianity ... but most of all, their fear of Communists (or former Communists) at home right there in America? How also did the intervention of the Supreme Court in America's religious development turn out to be so very significant?

How did political confusion at war's end in Korea lead to a bitter war between the North and South of that country ... and a strong division between Truman and MacArthur as to how American actions should proceed there? How was it that McCarthy was able to take such advantage of the Vets' fear of Communism in their country ... and leave such bitterness in the hearts of the American "Progressives" or "Left" against the Vets? Why would the Vets' offspring, the Baby Boomers, grow up to be so very different in their understanding of life and its dynamics than their "Middle American" Vet parents? Why did the in-between generation of "Silents" resemble more the Vets than the younger Boomers in their social profile? Where did American Blacks fit in this social profile?

How did Stalin's death in 1953 raise hopes of a lightening of the Russian grip and a calming of the Cold War? How did that actually work out ... in Berlin, in Iran, in Hungary? Why were the efforts of Britain and France to hold onto their vital Suez Canal such poor timing in all this dynamic ... and what were the political results for both Britain and France? How was America's "anti-imperialist" foreign policy principle not evident in America's dealings with its Latin neighbors to the South? How was American Christianity itself undergoing significant changes at the time?

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### **Volume Three – The Dismissing of America's Covenant with God**

#### Chapter 1 - pp. 1-32 (The Early 1960s: Middle America's Last Hurrah)

Why was Eisenhower's advice about the dangers of growing corporatism at home not really well understood by Middle America at the time? In what ways did Kennedy represent a new, younger spirit ... one that appealed greatly to the Silent generation? Why did this new spirit have so little a political impact in places like Africa ... or in the matter of the new Berlin Wall? Why was that then viewed by Khrushchev as merely a mark of weakness? How did the Cuban missile crisis change that dynamic? Why was former French Indo-China meanwhile becoming a greater problem?

How were deep social changes beginning to develop in America itself ... especially in Black-White relations



and in the matter of Christian traditionalism versus Secular Humanism? What was the rising role of the Supreme Court in all of this? Why was Congress unable to counter the Court's major political-legal initiatives undercutting Christianity's traditional social-moral role in American society?

## Chapter 2 - pp. 33-73 (The Later 1960s: The Rise of the Welfare State)

How did the political changeover after Kennedy's assassination change the character of American politics deeply? What type of thinking formed the basis of Johnson's political programs? In what ways did Johnson's Great Society programs take America down the "corporate" route that Eisenhower warned America to avoid? How was American society itself dividing down similar lines ... encouraged greatly by an alliance between now-rising Boomers and their academic mentors – who treated Middle America as a culture flawed in every respect: race, sex, religion, lifestyle in general. How did the federal courts jump into this dynamic?

Why was Johnson's Vietnam War such a catastrophe ... and succeed only in turning the Boomers even more militantly against their Middle America? How did all this tempt De Gaulle to try to replace American leadership in Europe with French leadership? Where did America stand in the 1967 fight between Israel and its Arab neighbors ... and in the 1968 Czech crisis ... and in matters concerning Mao's China? Why was 1968 such a horrible year at home in America itself?

## Chapter 3 - Part One - pp. 74-99 (The 1970s – America Divides Ideologically-2)

How did Nixon's election fail to close the gap between Middle America and its supposedly Progressivist or Boomer-Intellectualist adversaries? Why was Nixon's (and Kissinger's) Realpolitik so poorly understood or accepted by this Progressivist America ... especially in Nixon's winding down the American disaster in Vietnam? Why did Nixon's détente with both the Soviets and Chinese go unappreciated by his Democratic Party or Progressivist adversaries? In what ways did the Watergate issue give Nixon's adversaries the weapons to bring down this otherwise very popular president? How did his Congressional adversaries even cut back Nixon's ability to restrict "pork barrel" spending by Congress and the federal bureaucracy? How did the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 test Nixon-Kissinger's Realpolitik? How did Congress's collapse of the Nixon presidency also then lead to the murderous collapse of the political systems of both South Vietnam and Cambodia? Why did Congress fail to understand any of this?

## Chapter 3 - Part Two - pp. 99-130 (The 1970s – America Divides Ideologically-2)

Why did the "outsider" Carter (Georgia governor) rather than the "insider" Ted Kennedy (US Senator) become the Democratic Party presidential candidate in 1976? What did Carter mean by claiming to bring "Morality" to the conduct of American foreign policy? How did that relate to his surrender of the Panama Canal? How did that confuse Iranian politics deeply and dangerously – despite a quick return of Carter to something more resembling Realpolitik – and what was the larger outcome for both Iran and the world? How did the oil crisis caused by the fall of the Shah produce a global economic crisis ... one worsened greatly by Volcker's intervention to "fight" inflation – actually only making it much, much worse?

How was the assault by American Progressivists on Middle America and its longstanding social standards intensified in the 1970s? How was it that the Supreme Court took a leading role in this social development? How did Christianity try to make a comeback in the face of this same development? What was the exact nature of the Christian faith held by all three 1970s presidents – Nixon, Ford, and Carter?

## Chapter 4 - pp. 131-170 (The Reagan-Bush Era – 1981-1992)

In what different ways did Regan demonstrate that he too was a practitioner of Realpolitik (eg. Lebanon, Granada)? How was it that America was able to climb out of the economic depression that hit at the beginning of the 1980s? Why was tying Social Security to the federal debt not a good idea? What was the Iran-Contra Affair all about? Why did China succeed brilliantly and Russia fail catastrophically in their efforts to free up their societies? What was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait all about ... and how did Bush, Sr. handle the matter?

How was America itself undergoing a process of "Liberalization" ... and what were the varying Christian responses to these developments? Why could Reagan not get an amendment passed to override the Supreme Court's forbidding of prayer in public schooling? How in 1987 did the Supreme Court go even further in undercutting America's longstanding Christian cultural-moral foundations? Why were Supreme Court nominations now so very political? Where did Reagan and Bush Sr. themselves stand as Christians?

#### Chapter 5 - pp. 171-199 (Clinton – and the Arrival of the Boomer Era)

Why did Bush Sr. get so easily replaced by the Boomer Clinton ... and what was so unique about Clinton? How is it that Gingrich forced Clinton to back away from his Liberal programming instincts ... and have Clinton become himself rather "centrist" – even somewhat conservative – in economic-social matters? How did that work well for America itself? How did Clinton also demonstrate Realpolitik instincts when it came to foreign policy matters (Somalia, Israel-Palestine, Haiti, Rwanda ... and ultimately Bosnia)? How was that same Realpolitik instinct put to service several years later in Kosovo, in relations with Russia, and in NATO's expansion?

But in what ways was the Arab Middle East firing up as a major problem area? How did Muslim aggressiveness impact America itself in 1993? How was America itself showing ever deeper instincts for violence in its handling of social-political matters (Ruby Ridge, Waco, Oklahoma City, O.J. Simpson, Columbine High School)? How was it now that Congress's impeaching of presidents seems to have become a regular part of the American political process?

#### Chapter 6 - pp. 200-249 ("Neo-Conservatism" under Bush Jr-1)

What did Bush Jr. mean by "Neo-Conservatism"? How did 9/11 change all American priorities? What were Bush's intentions in Afghanistan ... and what were Rumsfeld's ideas on the matter? Why not also take on Pakistan ... a much bigger al Qaeda base? Why did Bush (and Cheney-Rumsfeld) turn America's attention fully to Saddam's Iraq? Why did the world fail to offer its support to the Iraq operation the way it did to the Afghanistan operation? What was the original plan for Iraq ... and how did that work out? What was the 2007 troop "Surge" all about?

What deep social-moral changes were taking place in the American economic dynamic during those same Bush Jr. years? Why did that all end up as a catastrophic 2008 economic "meltdown"? Why did Bush now believe that it was the government's job to bail corporate America out of this catastrophe? How at the same time were the moral foundations of Christian "Middle America" further undercut politically (especially by the federal courts)?

#### Chapter 7 - Part One - pp. 250-267 (Obama "Changes" America)

Why was a well-recognized American war hero (McCain) unable to defeat a relatively politically-inexperienced Obama in the 2008 elections? What did Obama have in mind with his call for deep "Change" in America? How did the hand of the federal government in America's economic-social life to continue to widen under Obama? How was all of this dividing Congress into distinct Republican-Democratic Party lines ... with almost nothing representing the political center? Why did the federal debt climb (double even) in each of the Bush Jr. and Obama 8-year (two-terms each) presidential years?

#### Chapter 7 - Part Two - pp. 267-301 (Obama "Changes" America)

Why was Obama nominated (and ultimately awarded) the Nobel Peace Prize ... before he had done anything of note? In what ways did Obama move to end American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan ... and with what results? What about the bin Laden takedown? How did the spreading spirit of revolt in the Middle East (the 2011 "Arab Spring") come to involve America – and with what results ... particularly in Libya and Syria? How was China now taking on a more familiar heavy hand in its politics both at home and abroad ... and Russia also? How did Obama and the West react to this?

How once again did American political dynamics seem to center on the Supreme Court ... and its new

appointments? How did Obama's and the Courts' actions impact Middle America's foundational social values (such as Congress's once widely-supported 1996 Defense of Marriage Act or DOMA)? How in other areas were deep changes in the American social agenda becoming evident?

#### Chapter 8 - pp. 302-330 (Into the Age of Trump)

Why was the 2016 election such a controversial event? How was research material developed by the Hillary campaign used as a basis to try to impeach Trump? What was happening during the very long investigation into the matter ... and with what ultimate results? How would Trump's Supreme Court appointments change the political disposition of the Court? On what basis did the Democrats attempt a second time to impeach Trump?

Why were hordes of people heading to America across its border with Mexico? How were China and Russia becoming more aggressive in their relations with America and the West. How was the Trump personality itself part of Trump's own foreign policy program ... and with what results? How did the Corona Virus outbreak – and subsequent lockdown – impact America and the world politically and socially?

#### Chapter 9 - pp. 331-359 (The Lessons of History)

In what key ways does America seem deeply divided between two very different moral-spiritual approaches to life: the Spiritual or Christian approach and the Materialist or Mechanical approach? How has that actually always been the case ... even since America's early years in the 1600s? Why is the matter of God so controversial in America today? What are the essential differences between Human Reason and Divine Reason? Why are strong moral codes so vital to the strength and success of any society? Why is the moral character of a society's leaders also of critical importance to any society? Why is it so hard for some people to see God's hand in human history ... especially in this matter of God's long-standing covenant with America? What is Christian or Middle America to do today in the face of these challenges?