



The Academy

Course: "Foundations of Law and Justice"

8-week online course for political and church leaders

Instructor:

Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau holds law degrees from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and the University of Heidelberg (Germany) whilst also having studied law, philosophy and theology courses at Franciscan University of Steubenville, the University of Notre Dame (USA) and at the Ecole Saint-Jean in Saint Jodard (France). He obtained with distinction his doctorate in philosophy of law from the University of Vienna (Austria), writing a dissertation on *"Human Dignity and the Law in post-War Europe"*, which was published internationally in 2013. Dr. von Geusau practiced law at international law firms Houthoff and AKD in Amsterdam and Brussels from 1997 until 2004 and currently serves as President and Rector of *ITI Catholic University* near Vienna, Austria where he is also a Professor for Philosophy of Law and Christian Education. During his studies in the United States Dr. Geusau worked in prison ministry as a social worker. He also served as a court's legal clerk writing judgements during his time as an attorney in Amsterdam and focused his legal practice on issues of civil and European law and conflict resolution. Von Geusau leads the *International Catholic Legislators Network (ICLN)*, which he founded in 2010 to provide political and church leaders with (faith) formation, fellowship and networking opportunities. You may access some of his lectures, interviews and presentations [here](#)

Course description:

This introductory course for (aspiring) legislators and others in public office - including church leaders dealing with matters of policy, legislation and their impact on church teaching and practice - investigates what are the unchangeable core principles of justice and the law in light of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian philosophical, theological and legal traditions. The great masters of then have concrete answers for the problems and challenges of public policy and law making today. Democracy, civil liberties and the Rule of Law were born out of this rich tradition and are still today deeply rooted in its timeless principles, even when willingly or unwillingly ignored by most in high office. As the great German legal philosopher and long-time judge on the German Federal Constitutional Court, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, famously wrote: *"The secular and liberal-democratic state depends entirely on prerequisites and principles that it cannot itself guarantee"*. This course seeks to make known and applicable these principles to those called to serve the common good in elected or appointed office.

Course structure:

Eight weekly sessions of 50 minutes each during July and August 2020. **The course will be conducted exclusively online** through real time video and recording of each session, allowing participants to either attend live or by watching the recording at a later time. The course includes the possibility of Q&A through the video and chat function during the live course session or by submitting written questions through e-mail to the instructor. The course will be taught in English.

Course outline:

Session 1: What is law, what is justice?

Session 2: Plato and Aristotle on the sources of justice

Session 3: Cicero on nature and reason

Session 4: Cicero on good laws and bad laws

Session 5: Thomas Aquinas on the four kinds of law

Session 6: Benedict XVI on the listening heart and law

Session 7: Case study: *Obergefell et. al. v. Hodges*, 2015 Judgment of the US Supreme Court

Session 8: Case study: *Nicklinson v. Ministry of Justice*, 2012 Judgment of the UK High Court of Justice

Course outcomes:

1. Having identified the principles of justice, law making and public policy
2. Applying these principles to one's own work in public office
3. Understanding the distinction between just and unjust laws and their consequences for society and for those called to serve in political or church office.

Course work:

- Preparatory readings as assigned by the instructor (see below)
- In-class seminar-style discussion
- Concluding essay

Course texts:

Holy Scripture: excerpts from the Old and New Testaments; **Plato:** excerpts from "The Laws"; **Aristotle:** excerpts from "Nicomachean Ethics" and "The Politics"; **Marcus Tullius Cicero:** excerpts from "Laws"; **Thomas Aquinas:** excerpts from "Treatise on Law"; **Benedict XVI:** "The Listening Heart: On the Foundations of Law"; Case law; **ICLN:** "Great Texts by Great Popes". *All texts will be provided by e-mail with attached pdf file after completion of registration and payment for the course.*

Practical details:

The course is limited to 20 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis. Cost: €150,- (advance payment, non-refundable). Please register by sending an e-mail with your contact details and brief biography to: office@icln.at. You will then receive a confirmation e-mail with international transfer details (wire transfer and PayPal). Once payment has been received, you will receive further information as to the course dates and times, accessing the video conferencing platform and recordings, as well as a reading packet in pdf format. At the end of the course and having completed all 8 sessions and the concluding essay, an official ICLN Academy certificate with full course details will be handed out.