

Handout for Roadmap to Ruin – Class on 6/22/2025

From *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Christian Nationalism* by Katherine Stewart

“Many faith groups are involved in seeking to restore the rights of the undefended and disenfranchised...There are innumerable avenues of involvement, and they represent democracy in action. I believe they have the power to succeed, because they follow in the footsteps of those who have done so in the past.”

“Many leaders of the Christian right like to dress up in red, white, and blue and announce themselves as true patriots. But they are the same people who seek to pervert our institutions, betray our international alliances and make friends with despots, degrade the public discourse, treat the Constitution as a subcategory of their holy texts, demean whole segments of the population, foist their authoritarian creed upon other people’s children, and celebrate the elevation of a “king” to the presidency who has made a sport out of violation democratic laws and norms. We don’t need lessons on patriotism from Christian nationalists. We need to challenge them in the name of the nation we actually have – a pluralistic, democratic nation – people and their representatives in accordance with the Constitution.”

“Reactionary authoritarianism doesn’t come out of nowhere. It draws much of its destructive energy from social and economic injustices that leave a few with too much power and many others with too little hope. Rising economic inequality and insecurity has created a large mass of people, on all ends of the economic spectrum, who are anxious for their future and predisposed to favor calls for unity around an identity that targets others for vilification and degradation. And it has elevated the power of a small group of people with the means and desire to control the social order for their own benefit. Addressing inequality won’t by itself resolve the challenges of the Christian nationalist movement, but it will take some air out of its bellows.”

“In some ways, Christian nationalism is the fruit of a society that has not yet lived up to the promise of the American idea. There is work to be done, but for now we are free to do it. We have met challenges in the past – well enough, at least to make it to the present moment. Religious nationalists are using the tools of democratic political culture to end democracy. I continue to believe those same resources can be used to restore it.”