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Faith, Politics, and Power: The Politics of Faith-Based Initiatives

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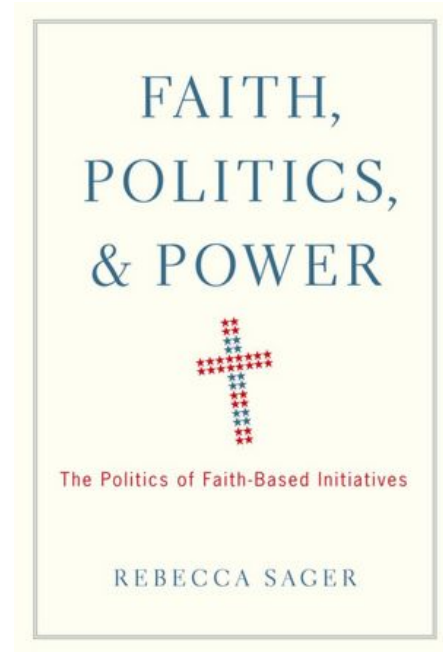
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Faculty Pub Night – Fall 2012

Date: September 18, 2012

Speaker: Rebecca Sager



About the Author

Rebecca Sager is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology. She holds a doctorate and masters of Sociology from the University of Arizona. Her work looks at the intersection of religion, politics, and social movements. She has published a number of articles on this topic and her book, *Faith, Politics, and Power: The Politics of Faith-Based Initiatives* (Oxford), looks at the role conservative evangelical movement actors played in promoting the faith based initiative at the state level. Her project, "Are You Better Off Alone?: Religious and Secular Partnerships in Social Service and Political Outreach" researches the partnerships between Catholic and secular groups in political organizing and social services. Despite an array of partnerships between Catholic and secular groups in political organizing and social services, there is still little understanding of how these partners actually feel or think about one another and how well these relationships work. Do religious activists like working with secular leaders or do they feel it is compromising their values? Do secular activists feel like they have to give up too much to work with religious leaders or that religion infuses too much of their work? This project aims to begin to address these questions, and others, by looking at the partnerships between secular and Catholic groups in Los Angeles.

About the Author's Work

During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush made faith-based social services one of the centerpieces of his domestic agenda. These "faith-based initiatives," supporters argued, would reduce poverty, ease the strain on an overburdened welfare system, and prove more effective than government programs. Opponents feared rampant proselytizing with government funds. Instead, these practices created a system in which neither the greatest hopes of its supporters, nor the greatest fears of its

opponents, have been realized. The product of five years of in-depth research, Rebecca Sager's *Faith, Politics, and Power* offers a systematic examination of where and how these programs were implemented, arguing that faith-based initiatives strayed from supporters' original aim of helping the poor, and instead were used as tools to gain political power by the Republican Party and the conservative evangelical movement.