

POLT 486. AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Spring 2006: MWF, 3 – 3.50pm, Tilton 301

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GOALS & SUBJECTS OF THE COURSE. This is a survey of American political thought designed for advanced political science majors. The goals of this course are (1) to familiarize you with the ideas of some influential American political thinkers, (2) to help you learn how to think both theoretically and critically about these thinkers' ideas and the problems they address, (3) to help you practice the skills that democratic citizenship requires (speaking and writing persuasively, reading and listening sympathetically), and (4) to encourage you to explore your own political views and identity through group discussions, challenging readings, and regular written assignments.

We will be reading and discussing a variety of works (speeches, essays, autobiographies, poetry, plays, films, manifestos, etc.) to learn how Americans have conceptualized politics, political identities, and political institutions. In addition to examining competing ideas about such issues as the proper shape and scope of the state or the sanctity of contract, we will consider how Americans have conceived and executed history, how various forms of media inform public and private consciousness, and how particular narratives and myths have structured American identity.

REQUIRED TEXTS. The following texts are available in the Tulane University Bookstore:

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography & Other Writings* (Penguin).

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense, The Rights of Man, & Other Essential Writings* (Signet).

David Wootton (ed), *The Essential Federalist & Anti-Federalist Papers* (Hackett).

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks* (Penguin).

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Penguin).

WEB Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Norton).

John Dewey, *Individualism Old & New* (Prometheus).

There will be numerous additional readings, available online or as handouts.

Each student will also pick one supplemental book to read and review (see below). New and used copies of these books should be easy to find through online sources.

COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES. As a student in this class, you have five main responsibilities:

1. CAREFULLY READ EACH ASSIGNED TEXT, and arrive to class prepared to discuss it. This class will be run as a seminar; I expect a lot of discussion on your end. This does not mean you should arrive to class prepared to explain what we've read, but you should arrive to class having something significant to say about it. This might be an insight into how it fits into the course as a whole, something it illuminates about an enduring political issue or another text we've read, thoughts on a particular passage that you'd like to examine in closer detail, or one or more well-formulated questions about the reading that might spur class discussion. We will often be looking directly at the texts during our discussions, so always bring the readings to class. Your performance here will account for 10% of your final grade.
2. WRITE 3 THOUGHT PAPERS exploring the content and implications of the week's assigned readings. These papers should be *no more than 4 double spaced pages* and should do more than summarize the readings. These papers should make an argument about the texts we've read by exploring the theoretical or practical implications of a particular aspect of the readings; or by tying the readings to dominant

themes of the class; or by comparing the readings to something else we (or you) have read; or by discussing a reading's historical context so as to illuminate something about the period, the reading, or both; etc. These papers are worth 10% each, or 30% of your final grade.

3. REVIEW ONE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL BOOKS listed on the syllabus. This review should be the same length as your short papers on the weekly writings (no more than 4 pages), though it will be slightly different in tone as you will be writing about a book that nobody else in the class has read. The supplemental texts are intended to increase our understanding of the required readings; you will be expected to tell the class about this book so as to help them understand the context or implications of the texts *they* have read. Therefore, you should provide some summary and then explain how the supplemental text relates to what we're reading for that week. Because texts are always written in particular contexts (and because some, though not all, of the supplemental books were written in a different context than the one we're studying that week), context and information about the author might be helpful. I recommend, though do not require, that you come talk to me about this assignment before handing it in, so we can talk about your ideas and focus. This review accounts for 20% of your final grade.
4. EVALUATE 2 THOUGHT PAPERS written by your colleagues. Here you will receive a copy of a paper written by a classmate, and you will provide written comments (1 single-spaced page) on the ideas and presentation. The point here is not to simply tell your colleagues "good work" or "your commas are misplaced" (though each of these would be appropriate and helpful things to say), but rather to engage in a dialogue, questioning your colleagues interpretations of texts or tendencies. I expect these to be polished and thoughtful (though admittedly brief) essays engaging the content of the paper you are evaluating, not throwaway gestures. Each of these will account for 5% of your final grade, so 10% total.
5. WRITE A FINAL PAPER of *at least* 3,000 words (no more than 4,000) tracing a singular theme through American political thought. Possible themes could be individualism, class, race, sex, property, solidarity, or patriotism. More directions will follow. This paper may or may not draw on the papers you wrote earlier in the semester, and will account for 30% of your final grade.

All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the class. You cannot opt to skip a paper and forfeit the appropriate points.

DUE DATES. You choose when to write your papers, within the below parameters.

Group A will write THOUGHT PAPERS on even numbered weeks (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14); Group B will write on odd numbered weeks (3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13) plus week 12. Hopefully, since you get to choose which 3 of the 8 weeks you will write, you can focus your papers on readings that you find most interesting. Two (2) copies of each of these papers are due at the beginning of class on the appropriate WEDNESDAY. *There will be no extensions granted on these papers and late papers will not be accepted.*

You are free to write your REVIEW any week at all, but you cannot write a thought paper and a review on the same week. One (1) copy of this review is due at the beginning of class on the WEDNESDAY for which the book is assigned. *Late reviews will be docked one full letter grade for each day they are late.*

You can write your EVALUATIONS at any time, though one must be in the first half of the class (before or during week 7), and the other must be in the second half. These must be in my office by 11am on the FRIDAY of the same week. *Submissions by email will not be accepted without prior arrangement and late evaluations will not be accepted.*

FINAL PAPERS are due TBA. *Late papers will be docked on full letter grade for each day late.*

Papers and reviews should be double-spaced with 1" margins, standard 12 pt font, title, page numbers, staples, full citations and complete bibliographic information. You will be penalized if they are not properly formatted.

HONOR CODE. Students are obliged to abide by the Tulane University Honor Code. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask the instructor. Violations will be treated severely.

SCHEDULE.

Readings designated “W” are available through the course website: www.tulane.edu/~clavin/american.htm
Readings designated “ER” are available through the university’s Electronic Reserves.

WEEK 1

- W Jan 18 Hello
F Jan 20 Read: Barry Gewen, “Forget the Founding Fathers” (W)

WEEK 2 CHURCH & STATE IN A NEW WORLD (Group A)

- M Jan 23 John Winthrop, “Account of the Antinomian Crisis” (ER)
John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (ER)
W Jan 25 Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (W)
F Jan 27 John Wise, “Democracy is Founded in Scripture” (ER)
Supplemental: Eve Laplante, *American Jezebel: The Uncommon Life of Anne Hutchinson, the Woman Who Defied the Puritans* (NY: Harper Collins, 2004)
Supplemental: Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2004)

WEEK 3 SMELLS LIKE COLONIAL REVOLUTION (Group B)

- M Jan 30 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (pp. 3-51)
W Feb 1 Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, Prefaces (pp. 129-134) and Part II, chs 1-3 (pp. 270-293)
F Feb 3 Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, selections (pp. 351-70)
Supplemental: Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (NY: Vintage, 1991)
Supplemental: Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press, 1976)

WEEK 4 FEDERALISTS & ANTIFEDERALISTS (Group A)

- M Feb 6 *The Federalist* nos. 9-10, 39, 48, and 51 (pp. 162-174, 225-231, 237-241, 245-250)
W Feb 8 Address of the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention (pp. 1-24)
Letters of Cato 4, 5 and Letters of Centinel 1 (pp. 58-74)
Essays of Brutus 6, 11, 12, 15 (pp. 74-96)
The Virginia Plan (pp. 324-326)
F Feb 10 US Constitution and Bill of Rights (pp. 326-338)
Supplemental: Robert Dahl, *Preface to a Democratic Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1963)
Supplemental: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (NY: Verso, 1991)

WEEK 5 MAKING THE SELF-MADE MAN (Group B)

- M Feb 13 No class.
W Feb 15 Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, 15-108
F Feb 17 Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, 181-186, 196-199, 232-233, 253-258, 266-270, 279-317
Supplemental: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass* (any edition)
Supplemental: Bruce Johansen, *Forgotten Founders: How the American Indian Helped Shape Democracy* (Boston: Harvard Common Press, 1987)

WEEK 6 TRANSCENDENT INDIVIDUALS (Group A)

- M Feb 20 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self Reliance” (W)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (W)
W Feb 22 Alexis De Tocqueville, “A Fortnight in the Wild” (W)

- F Feb 24 Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (W)
Supplemental: Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2002)
- Feb 26 – Mar 5 *Spring Break*
- WEEK 7 SLAVERY & ABOLITIONISM** (Group B)
- M Mar 6 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chs. 1-16
- W Mar 8 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chs. 23-26, 29-30, 39-45
- F Mar 10 Frederick Douglass, "Speech at the Anti-Slavery Association" (ER)
Abraham Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision" (ER)
Supplemental: EH Carr, *What is History?* (NY: Random House, 1961)
Supplemental: David Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (NY: Knopf, 2005).
- WEEK 8 CULTURE & CAPITAL** (Group A)
- M Mar 13 Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*
- W Mar 15 Slaughterhouse cases (1873), majority and dissenting opinions (ER)
Lochner v. New York (1905), majority decision (ER)
Muller v. Oregon (1908), majority decision (ER)
West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parrish (1937), majority decision (ER)
- F Mar 17 Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth" (W)
Supplemental: William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (any edition)
Supplemental: Jeffrey Decker, *Made in America: Self-Styled Success from Horatio Alger to Oprah Winfrey* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)
- WEEK 9 SEEING DOUBLE** (Group B)
- M Mar 20 WEB Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (chs. I-IV)
- W Mar 22 WEB Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (chs VI-VIII)
- F Mar 24 WEB Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (chs. IX-X, XIV)
Supplemental: Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (any edition)
Supplemental: Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Northeastern University Press, 1983)
- WEEK 10 RADICAL DEPRESSION** (Group A)
- M Mar 27 Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" (W)
- W Mar 29 Eugene Debs "Revolutionary Unionism" (W)
The Progressive Party Platform of 1912 (W)
- F Mar 31 FDR, "The Commonwealth Club Address" and "An Economic Bill of Rights" (W)
Margaret Sanger, "The Case for Birth Control" (W)
Supplemental: Cass Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More than Ever* (NY: Basic Books, 2004)
Supplemental: Edmund Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (NY: 4 Walls and 8 Windows, 2004)
- WEEK 11 PRAGMATISM** (Group B)
- M Apr 3 John Dewey, *Individualism Old & New*, chs. 1-3
- W Apr 5 John Dewey, *Individualism Old & New*, chs. 4-6
- F Apr 7 John Dewey, *Individualism Old & New*, chs. 7-8
Supplemental: Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)
Supplemental: Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)

- WEEK 12 AMERICAN DREAMS, AMERICAN NIGHTMARES** (Group A and B)
- M Apr 10 Movie: “Death of a Salesman,” starring Dustin Hoffman (1985)
Iain Levison, “Becoming an Associate” (ER)
- W Apr 12 John Stormer, *None Dare Call It Treason*, chs. 1, 6 (ER)
HUAC, *100 Things You Should Know About Communism & Education* (W)
www.discoverthenetwork.com
- Supplemental: William H Whyte, *Organization Man* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1956)
Supplemental: Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (NY: Little, Brown, & Co, 1998)
Supplemental: Philip Jenkins, *Images of Terror: What We Can and Can't Know About Terrorism* (NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003)
- F Apr 14 No class
- WEEK 13 FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO BLACK POWER** (Group B)
- M Apr 17 Martin Luther King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail” (W)
- W Apr 19 Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (W)
- F Apr 21 Black Panther Party for Self Defense, “10 Point Program” (W)
Supplemental: Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993)
Supplemental: Kwame Ture (aka Stokely Carmichael) and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: Politics of Liberation* (NY: Vintage, 1966)
- WEEK 14 SIXTIES AND BEYOND...** (Group A)
- M Apr 24 Movie: “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” starring Jack Nicholson (1975)
- W Apr 26 Ralph Reed, “What the World Would Look Like” (ER)
Robert H. Bork, “Their Will Be Done” (W)
- F Apr 28 Thomas Frank, “Lie Down for America” (ER)
Supplemental: Doug Henwood, *After the New Economy: The Binge and the Hangover that Won't Go Away* (NY: New Press, 2005)
Supplemental: Dinesh D’Souza, *The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence* (NY: Free Press, 2000).

** Final Papers due TBA **