

Department of Political Science
SUNY Oneonta
Fall 2002

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Political Science 203

HISTORY OF AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Mondays and Wednesdays, 4-5:15 p.m.
319 Fitzelle Hall

Course Description

This course will survey the history of American political thought from the European conquest of the Americas to the present, in a selective and somewhat thematic manner. The course will begin with inquiries into the political thought of the Puritans, the revolutionary generation, and the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Next we will examine attempts to democratize American social and political institutions and to eliminate slavery in the early nineteenth-century. The third segment of the course will investigate the emergence of industrial society and the effects of mass immigration and ethnic diversity on American political culture. Finally, the semester will end with a sampling of recent approaches to American political culture and institutions in an age of relative affluence and technological advancement.

Course Goals

The primary aim of the course will be to give students an historical overview of American political thought and culture. The course will also serve to introduce students to the writings of several influential political thinkers, including leaders of the founding generations of colonial and republican America; Tocqueville, Thoreau, and Lincoln; modern industrialists and their critics; and recent social and cultural commentators. Finally, the course will offer students an opportunity to develop their critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.

Course Requirements

Reading. This course will have a heavy yet quite rewarding reading list. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the semester. Plan to spend a fair amount of time reading *before* attending class and, at times, re-reading after class. In general, texts are to be brought to our meetings so that they may be referred to in lecture and discussion.

Course Meetings and Discussion. Most course meetings will consist of a mix of lecture and informal discussion. Students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually and be ready to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner. Students will be assigned the job of helping to begin at least one class discussion during the semester, and all students will be expected to participate in class discussions with some regularity. Performance in our discussions will strongly influence the participation grade.

Writing and Examinations. Students will be required to: write several 1½-2 page summary and reaction papers; take two take-home midterm examinations; and write a take-home final examination and project.

Required Texts

Political Thought in America: An Anthology, ed. Michael B. Levy, 2nd ed. (Waveland Press, 1992).

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin, 1985).

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, ed. Henry Steele Commager, rev. ed. (Signet Classic, 1961).

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (Vintage International, 1993).

David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (Touchstone, 2000).

Grading and Attendance Policies

Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner:

1. First take-home midterm	Mon., 23 September	15%
2. Second take-home midterm due	Mon., 21 October	20%
3. Six 1½-2 page text reaction papers due	at various times	18%
4. One 1½-2 page film reaction paper due	Mon., 11 November	2%
5. Term project due	Mon., 16 December	15%
6. Take-home final examination	Mon., 16 December	20%
7. Participation		<u>10%</u>
TOTAL:		100%

Written assignments will include two take-home essay midterms; six 1½-2 page papers summarizing and reacting to readings; one 1½-2 page paper summarizing and reacting to a film; a term project of 4-5 pages; and a take-home final examination.

The schedule of papers and exams appears above and below. You will be expected to meet all of the deadlines listed. Exceptions will be made only in extreme and unavoidable circumstances. If you miss or expect to miss a deadline, contact me as soon as possible. Either attend my office hours, or give me a note or an e-mail message explaining your circumstances.

The six 1½-2 page reaction papers will be graded minimally: plus, check, check/minus, minus. Pluses will earn extra credit (3.5%), with checks gaining full credit (3%); check/minuses receiving partial credit (2%); and minuses receiving reduced (1%) or zero credit. There are nine possible reaction papers – each student must write at least six, and one must be written every third time (so at least one among assignments 1-3, one among assignments 4-6; and one among assignments 7-9). The grade will be based on the best six papers completed, if more than six are written. No late papers will be accepted. Details on this requirement are given on the handout attached to this syllabus.

Regular, timely attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences and tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. The fourth unexcused absence will lower your grade one step (for example, from a B+ to a B). Each subsequent absence will lower your grade another full step. More than six unexcused absences may result in a failing grade, or involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Tardiness will also be noted. After the third late arrival, every instance of tardiness will be treated as an absence. Course meetings are few and brief, so be in class and be on time.

If you have a good reason to be absent or late, notify me in writing as soon as possible, explaining and documenting your absence. Either give me a note in class or send me an e-mail message. I will notify you if I accept your explanation or if we need to talk more about it during my office hours.

Expect to attend class for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving early, please notify me in advance in writing (e-mail is best). If you cannot notify me in advance, do so as soon as you can afterwards.

All students are required to attend class during the final examination period.

As a courtesy to all, please turn off pagers and telephones while in class.

Note that this entire syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Office Hours/Communication

I will hold regular office hours on Mondays from 5:15-6:15 p.m., Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 p.m., and Wednesdays from 1-2 p.m., in my office at 412 Fitzelle Hall. I can also make appointments at other times and on other days, if necessary. My telephone number is 436-2754. Notes can be left for me in my mailbox at the Political Science/Sociology Office, 418 Fitzelle Hall. E-mail messages can also be sent to me at:

mcennedj@oneonta.edu

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Notes: All assignments are to be completed *before* class.

PTA = *Political Thought in America*, ed. Michael B. Levy

Items marked with asterisks (*) will be placed on reserve or made available on line.

1. Founding Dreams: Puritan Virtues and “Natural” Man

Mon., 26 August	<u>Introduction</u>
Wed., 28 August	<u>Savagery, Grace, and Works in the Puritan New World (1)</u> Reading: Selections from <i>Political Thought in America</i> [<i>“PTA”</i>], pp. 6-15: -John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630); -Winthrop, "A Little Speech on Liberty" (1645);
Mon., 2 September	<u>Savagery, Grace, and Works in the Puritan New World (2)/Discussion 1</u> Reading: Selections from <i>Political Thought in America</i> [<i>“PTA”</i>], pp. 15-25, 29-37; -John Cotton, et al, "A Platform of Church Discipline" (1649); and -Roger Williams, "The Bloudy Tenant of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience" (1644). *Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) and "The Maypole of Merry Mount," (1836) in <i>The Celestial Railroad and Other Stories</i> (Signet Classics, 1980), pp. 87-100, 115-126.
Wed., 4 September	<u>Working Grace in the New World / Discussion 2</u> Reading: *Benjamin Franklin, "Autobiography" (excerpts, 1789), in <i>American Political Thinking</i> , ed. Robert Isaak (Harcourt Brace, 1994), pp. 52-57. Assignment: First reaction paper due.

2. Revolution and Union

Mon., 9 September	<u>Loyalist Conservatism, Whiggish Moderation, and Enlightenment Radicalism</u> Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i> , pp. 52-91: -Samuel Seabury, "A View of the Controversy between Great Britain and Her Colonies" (1774); -Daniel Leonard, "Massachusettensis" (1775); -John Adams, <i>Novanglus</i> (1775); -Samuel Langdon, "Government Corrupted by Vice, and Recovered by Righteousness" (1775); -Thomas Paine, <i>Common Sense</i> (1776); -Thomas Jefferson, <i>The Declaration of Independence</i> (1776), "Letter to Henry Lee" (1825), and "Letter to Roger C. Weightman" (1826); and -Jonathan Boucher, "A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution" (1797).
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Wed., 11 September	<p><u>Discussion 3 / The Jeffersonian Republic versus the Federalist Nation</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 97-137:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Jay" (1785), "Letter to John Bannister, Jr." (1785); "Letter to James Madison" (1785), "Letter to Jean Baptiste Say" (1804); -John Adams, "Letter to Samuel Adams" (1790); -Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist No. 1" (1787-8); -James Madison, "Federalist No. 10" (1787-8); -Hamilton, "Federalist No. 15" (1787-8); -Madison, "Federalist Nos. 39, 51, 57, 62" (1787-8); -Hamilton, "Federalist No. 70" (1787-8) and "Report on Manufactures" (1791).
Mon., 16 September	FIRST FALL BREAK – Enjoy a long weekend!
Wed., 18 September	<p><u>Anti-Federalism</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 138-64:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to James Madison" (1787); -James Winthrop, "The Letters of Agrippa, Nos. 4, and 13" (1787); -Samuel Bryan, "Letter of Centinel, No. 1" (1787); -Robert Yates, "Letters of Brutus, No. 11" (1788); -“Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of the State of Pennsylvania to Their Constituents” (1787); -Thomas Jefferson, "Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank" (1791), "Letter to Phillip Mazzei" (1796), and "Letter to Samuel Kercheval" (1816); and -Abigail Adams, "Letter to John Adams" (1776).
Mon., 23 September	<p><u>Discussion 4 – Catching Up</u></p> <p>Reading: Review the writings of the Puritans and the revolutionary and constitutional generations.</p> <p><i>Assignment: Second reaction paper due.</i></p> <p><u>FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED (15%)</u></p>

3. *Democracy and Union*

Wed., 25 September	<p><u>Democratic Questions in Jacksonian America</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 168-99:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -John Adams, "Letter to James Sullivan" (1776) and "Letter to John Taylor" (1814); -James Kent, "Speech Defending the Freeholders Suffrage for the New York State Senate" (1821); -Daniel Webster, "Speech in Defense of the Tariff" (1846); -David Buel, Jr., "Speech in Support of Universal Suffrage" (1821); and -Andrew Jackson, "Farewell Address" (1837).
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Mon., 30 September	<p><u>Democracy as Culture</u></p> <p>Reading: Alexis de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> (1835-40), in <i>PTA</i>, pp. 272-305.</p> <p><u>FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION DUE (15%)</u></p>
Wed., 2 October	<p><u>Discussion 5 / American Dissidence</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 199-215 and 232-256:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Walt Whitman, "Editorials" (1846-7) and <i>Democratic Vistas</i> (1871); -Horace Mann, "The Necessity of Education in a Republican Government" (1839); -Frances Wright, "On Existing Evils and Their Remedy" (1829); -Orestes A. Brownson, "The Laboring Classes" (1840); and -Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1849). <p>Assignment: Third reaction paper due.</p>
Mon., 7 October	<p><u>Slavery, White America, and American Others</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 306-17 and 259-71:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions" (1837) and "Fort Hill Address on the Relation Which the States and the General Government Bear to Each Other" (1831); -Angelina Grimke, "Human Rights Not Founded on Sex" (1837); and -Frederick Douglass, "Fourth of July Oration" (1852).
Wed., 9 October	<p><u>Discussion 6</u></p> <p>Reading: Catch up!</p>
Mon., 14 October	<p><u>Lincoln and Union</u></p> <p>Reading: 1. Abraham Lincoln, "Address before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois" (1838), "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision" (1857), "First Inaugural Address" (1861), and "The Gettysburg Address" (1863), in <i>PTA</i>, pp. 217-31; and</p> <p>2. *Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Henry L. Pierce and Others," (1859) and "Second Inaugural Address," (1865) in <i>American Political Thinking</i>, pp. 321-23.</p> <p>3. *Handout on "Dual Citizenship" and "Incorporation" (distributed in class).</p> <p><u>SECOND TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED (20%)</u></p>
Wed., 16 October	<p><u>Discussion 7 / Interlude: What was the American mind?</u></p> <p>Reading: Neil Postman, <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death</i> (1985), chs. 1-4, pp. 3-63.</p> <p>Assignment: Fourth reaction paper due.</p>

4. Industrialism and Diversity in America

Mon., 21 October	<p><u>The Struggles of Young Jane</u></p> <p>Reading: 1. Susan B. Anthony, "Speech in Defense of Equal Suffrage" (1873) from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 256-8; and 2. Jane Addams, <i>Twenty Years at Hull-House</i> (1910), preface & chs. 1-4, pp. xxi-ii, 1-57.</p> <p><u>SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION DUE (20%)</u></p>
Wed., 23 October <i>2nd Fall Break Begins</i>	<p><u>Personal Ethics in the Gilded Immigrant Society / Discussion 8</u></p> <p>Reading: Addams, <i>Hull-House</i> (1910), chs. 5-8, pp. 58-117.</p> <p>Assignment: Fifth reaction paper accepted early, if you want.</p>
Mon., 28 October	<p><u>A Civic Ideal: Is This America?</u></p> <p>Reading: Addams, <i>Hull-House</i> (1910), chs. 11, 14-15, pp. 153-70, 204-41.</p> <p>Assignment: Fifth reaction paper due.</p>
Wed., 30 October	<p><u>Social Darwinism and the Dominant Order</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 322-44 and 375-85: -William Graham Sumner, <i>What Social Classes Owe to Each Other</i> (1883); -Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth" (1889); -Russell H. Conwell, "Acres of Diamonds Speech" (1915); and -Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895); -W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Evolution of the Race Problem" (1909) and "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" (1903).</p>
Mon., 4 November	<p><u>Discussion 9 /The New Deal and the Origins of the New Right</u></p> <p>Reading: Selections from <i>PTA</i>, pp. 418-32, 435-44: -Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address" (1932); -Adolph A. Berle, Jr., "The Social Economics of the New Deal" (1933); -Milton Friedman, <i>Capitalism and Freedom</i> (1962)</p> <p>Assignment: Sixth reaction paper due.</p>
Wed., 6 November	<p><u>Film / Discussion 10</u></p> <p>Reading: Catch Up!</p> <p>Film: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Part 3: The Grandest Job in the World."</p> <p>Assignment: All students must write a 1½-2 paper summarizing & reacting to the film, due at the next class meeting. Value: 2% of final grade.</p>

5. Recent Visions of American Political Culture

Mon., 11 November	<p><u>Unsettling Business</u></p> <p>Reading: James Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i> (1962-3), pp. 1-47. <i>Assignment: Video reaction paper due.</i></p>
Wed., 13 November	<p><u>The Sixties: Beginning or End of American Democracy? / Discussion 7</u></p> <p>Reading: 1. Baldwin, <i>Fire Next Time</i> (1963), pp. 47-106. 2. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963), in <i>PTA</i>, pp. 452-9.</p>
Mon., 18 November	<p><u>Discussion 11 – Catching Up!</u></p> <p><i>Assignment: Seventh reaction paper due.</i></p>
Wed., 20 November	<p><u>Buying Virtue at the Millennium</u></p> <p>Reading: David Brooks, <i>Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There</i> (2000), introduction and chs. 1-2, pp. 9-102.</p>
Mon., 25 November	<p><u>Success, Thought, and Pleasure Redefined</u></p> <p>Reading: Brooks, <i>Bobos</i> (2000), ch. 3, selection from ch. 4, and ch. 5, pp. 102-50, 171-217. <i>Assignment: Eighth reaction paper due (alternate date: 2 December).</i></p> <p><u>FINAL PROJECT DISTRIBUTED (15%)</u></p>
Wed., 27 November	THANKSGIVING – Enjoy the holiday!
Mon., 2 December	<p><u>A New Morality for a New Republic? / Discussion 12</u></p> <p>Reading: Brooks, <i>Bobos</i> (2000), chs. 6-7, pp. 218-273. <i>Assignment: Eighth reaction paper due (alternate date).</i></p>
Wed., 4 December	<p><u>On Losing Our Minds</u></p> <p>Reading: Neil Postman, <i>Amusing Ourselves</i> (1985), chs. 5-8, pp. 64-124.</p>
Mon., 9 December	<p><u>The End of Critical Thinking (or, Who Remembers Enough to Vote?)/Discussion 13</u></p> <p>Reading: Postman, <i>Amusing Ourselves</i> (1985), chs. 9-11, pp. 125-63. <i>Assignment: Ninth reaction paper due.</i></p> <p><u>TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED (20%)</u></p>
Mon, 16 December	<u>FINAL PROJECT & EXAMINATION DUE IN CLASS AT 4 P.M. (15% & 20%)</u>

