

POS 450 American Political Thought

Fall 2010
Class #9072 & 9960 Honors
MW 3:45-5:00
SBS West 104
Credit Hours: 3

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Office Hours: MW 11:00-2:00, & by appt.

Description of the course

Official description: "Practical and theoretical development of American political thought from its English and colonial roots, through the founding of a new government, to current commentary and criticism. No prerequisites." The purpose of this course is to study key issues and problems in American political theory, including the origins of the political system, the social and political forces that have shaped American democracy, and the future of democracy. We will take a philosophical and historical approach to these questions, looking in particular at the "American jeremiad" and the struggle for land, labor, and liberty. We will pay special attention to slavery and segregation and the Black freedom struggles against them (abolition, Reconstruction, and the civil rights movement).

Readings

The following books are required and available at the bookstore:

- David Wootton, ed., *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Hackett 2003)
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Dover 1995)
- Wendell Phillips, *The Lesson of the Hour: On Abolition and Strategy* (Kerr 2001)
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (Free Press 1992)
- John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Swallow 1954)
- Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (University of California Press 1995)

I recommend that you buy the above editions, but it's not necessary. Total cost of the books is about \$75 new.

There are also a few required articles, as indicated in the "Course Outline and Schedule of Readings," below. They are available on the course web site.

Course web site: <http://vista.nau.edu>

Much of the course content (assignments, syllabus, roundtable teams, readings, links for further study, etc.) is available on Blackboard Vista. This course will show up when you go to <http://vista.nau.edu> and log on. You will be checking this site regularly.

Attendance policy

Political theory is a participatory subject. It is learned not only by reading and writing but also through discussion and debate. Further, some of these texts are difficult. Your understanding of them will be helped a lot by lectures and discussions. For this reason, attendance is important. As you would with any other missed appointment, call or email me if you will be absent for a class. You are responsible for all material missed due to absences.

Honors and graduate credit

If you are taking this course for honors or graduate credit, see me about the additional work required.

Student learning expectations

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Explain the key ideas and conflicts of the framing, antebellum, Reconstruction, and civil rights eras, and evaluate their impact on today
- Explain the key elements of liberalism and republicanism as well as basic terms such as liberal democracy, universal suffrage, and political equality
- Evaluate the roles slavery and segregation have played in shaping American democracy
- Evaluate the influence of the American jeremiad on American political thought
- Compare and contrast the theories of the authors and texts assigned
- Think critically and effectively communicate your own ideas on American political thought and development
- Synthesize class texts with materials from your own research (honors and grad students)
- Have a better sense of the future of American democracy

Assignments

1. A 5 page paper, due **October 6** (60 points)
2. A 6-7 page paper, due **November 15** (70 points)
3. An 8-10 page paper, due **December 13** (80 points)
4. Weekly response papers (30 points)
5. Two roundtables (10 points)

- **Total points** possible for the course: 250. Final grades will be determined according to the following: 225-250 points = A, 200-224 = B, 175-199 = C, 150-174 = D, 149 or below = F.
- **Late papers:** Please contact me *in advance* if you anticipate problems turning in your papers. Otherwise, late papers will be marked down one grade.
- **Response papers:** Every week (except weeks in which papers are due) you will turn in a one-page paper (typed, handwritten, or submitted to Vista) in response to a question I have posed to you about the reading. The purpose of the response papers is to help you understand the main argument of the text and develop your critique of it. Each response is worth 3 points. I will count your best 10 out of a possible 12 response papers for the whole semester, for a total of 30 points. *No late response papers accepted.*
- **Plagiarism:** If you plagiarize any part of your papers or response papers, you will fail the course. Plagiarism means the deliberate use of someone else's language, ideas, or other original material (i.e. material that is not common knowledge) without acknowledging the source.
- **Roundtables:** Each person will participate in two roundtables. A roundtable is a small group that leads class by presenting the key issues of a text, discussing its significance, and facilitating class discussion. The total possible points for each roundtable is 5, or 10 points for the semester. Missed roundtables cannot be made up without prior arrangement.
- Course content may vary from this outline to meet the needs of this particular group.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices when in class. Laptops are permitted for note taking and other classroom uses, but not for surfing the web or "multitasking." If you use your laptop for purposes outside of this course, I will ask you to stop bringing it to class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Please have the day's assignment read *before* class. Your ability to participate and do well in the class depends on staying caught up on the readings.

(V) = Available on Vista. (Click on the "Course readings" link.)

Date	Topic	Reading
	I. Theoretical perspectives on American political thought	
August 30		
September 1		Diamond, "Race Without Color" (V) Myrdal, <i>American Dilemma</i> chap. 1 (V)
6	NO CLASS: Labor Day	
8		Morgan, "The American Paradox" (V)
13		Bercovitch, <i>American Jeremiað</i> , ch. 1 (V) John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) (V)
15		Hartz, <i>The Liberal Tradition in America</i> chap. 1 (V) Hess, "Republicanism" (V)
20		Roundtable on theories of APT reread Bercovitch and Hartz
	II. The framing	
22		Declaration of Independence (V) Declaration (Jefferson's draft) (V) Articles of Confederation (V) Constitution of the United States (V)
27		Nedelsky, <i>Private Property e³ the Limits of American Constitutionalism</i> , chap. 1 (V) <i>Federalist Papers</i> , Numbers 1, 6, 9, 10, 15
29		<i>Federalist Papers</i> , Numbers 37, 39, 47, 51, 54, 78, 84, 85 (Note: #54 is on Vista)
4		Roundtable on the framing George Mason, "Objections to the Constitution ..." (Wootton pp. 1-3) Patrick Henry, "Speech of Patrick Henry before the Virginia Ratifying Convention" (Wootton, pp. 25-41) Reread <i>Federalist</i> 10, 51 Wills, "The Negro President" (V)

Date	Topic	Reading
	III. Slavery and abolition	
October 6		Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life</i> , Preface, Letter, chaps. 1-8 Olson, "Slavery in the U.S." (V) (optional) FIRST PAPER DUE
11		Douglass, chaps. 9-11
13		Phillips, <i>Lesson of the Hour</i> , pp. 45-94
18		Phillips, "Address to the Friends of Freedom and Emancipation in the United States" (V) Phillips, pp. 95-116, 129-159
20		Abraham Lincoln: (V) * "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum" (1838) * "A House Divided" (1858) * "Address at Cooper Institute" (1860) * "First Inaugural Address" (1861) * "To James C. Conkling" (1863) * "Address at Gettysburg" (1863) * "Second Inaugural Address" (1865)
25		Roundtable on slavery and abolition John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions" (1837) (V) George Fitzhugh, "Southern Thought" (1857) (V) South Carolina Declaration of Secession (1860) (V) Alexander Stephens, "Cornerstone Speech" (1861) (V) Constitution of the Confederate States of America (1861) (V)
	IV. Reconstruction	
27		Du Bois, <i>Black Reconstruction</i> , "To the Reader," chaps. 1-3
November 1		Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, U.S. Constitution (V) Emancipation Proclamation (V) Du Bois, chaps. 4, 5, 6 (pp. 128-131)

Date	Topic	Reading
November 3		Du Bois, chaps. 7 (pp. 182-190, 212-227), 9 (pp. 345-71; skim rest), 10
8		Roundtable on Reconstruction Du Bois, chaps. 14 (pp. 580-611, 630-635), 16 (skim 670-99; read 700-709)
	V. Pragmatism and progressivism	
10		Dewey, <i>The Public and Its Problems</i> , chaps. 2-3
15		Dewey, chap. 4 SECOND PAPER DUE
17		Dewey, chap. 5
22		Roundtable on Dewey and pragmatism "Carrie Nation," Wikipedia entry (V) Carrie Nation, <i>The Use & Need of the Life of Carrie Nation</i> , chaps. 8-10 (1908) (V)
	VI. The civil rights movement	
24		Payne, <i>I've Got the Light of Freedom</i> , Introduction, chaps. 1 (pp. 7-15), 2, 3
29		Payne, chaps. 4-5
December 1		Payne, chaps. 8-10
6		Payne, chaps. 11-12
8		Roundtable on civil rights movement Payne, chap. 13, Epilogue
	VII. Race, the jeremiad, and American political thought today	
Monday, December 13	Final Exam date (3:00-5:00)	Roundtable on American political thought today Mark Lilla, "The Tea Party Jacobins" (V) Melissa Harris-Lacewell, "Is this the Birth of a Nation?" (V) THIRD PAPER DUE

- **Safe Working and Learning Environment Policy:** Safe Working and Learning Environment, Students with Disabilities, Institutional Review Board, and Academic Integrity policies all apply to this course. These policies are available at <http://www4.nau.edu/diversity/swale.asp>.
- **Evacuation Notice:** In the event of an alarm, you must leave the building immediately by the nearest exit, and move away from the building. Do not use the elevators. Please help those who may need assistance in exiting.