

American Political Thought

Gov 2230 Spring 2019

Professor: Michael Hawley
Office Hours: Mon 4:30-5:30, Tu 1:30-3:30 PM, or by apt.

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Course Overview

This course focuses on the political thought of American statesmen, writers, and prominent citizens from the Founding up to the twenty-first century, with special emphasis on three critical “moments”: 1) the Founding, 2) the Crisis of the House Divided (slavery and the Civil War) and 3) the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of contemporary progressive and conservative visions of America. We will also spend time with one non-American author: Alexis de Tocqueville’s examination of American life in *Democracy in America*.

Course Aims:

The primary aims of this class are those that go into determining your grade for the course. Most basically, you will gain an understanding of the questions and problems that have driven the development of American political thought. You will hone your skills at reading difficult texts carefully and evaluating arguments. You will also improve your abilities in constructing your own written arguments, demonstrating your analytical skills, and expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively.

But there is another kind of aim for this course, one that will not be reflected in your grade. Everyone in this class currently lives in America, and many of us are American citizens. Coming to grips with the idea of America thus has a certain urgency for all of us. American political thought is often centrally concerned with discerning the meaning of America. Is it exceptional, a special case among nations? Or is it the archetypical or model nation? Can it be both? What is the American Experiment? And, is it a success? A failure? Not yet complete? Or even: a fraud? This class gives us the opportunity to begin answering some of these questions.

Course Books:

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Bowdoin’s textbook partner or online. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions. It truly is important to get the same editions; it helps keep all of us on the same page (literally) as we discuss the readings and when it comes time to write papers. All other texts will be posted on the Blackboard site. Blackboard readings constitute a major portion of the course’s readings; please bring copies of all the day’s reading to class.

Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Rossiter, with introduction by Charles R. Kesler (Mentor)
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago)
Steven B. Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (Yale)

Course requirements:

You will be required to write three papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced) on assigned topics. These are not research papers. The only texts you will need to write them will be what we read for this course. I will discuss the expectations and requirements for these papers at greater length in class. This class will also have a final exam. Finally, there is a participation component to your grade—which is composed both of in-class contributions as well as posts on the discussion forum on Blackboard. For the latter, you are required to post 8 reading responses (roughly 150 words each) over the course of the semester. This averages out to roughly one such response for every three class meetings, but you may distribute them however you like throughout the semester. These responses must not exceed 200 words. In them, you should raise a question, pose an objection, or make an argument about some aspect of the next day's reading. You are encouraged also to respond to posts by your fellow students. In order to count, you need to post by midnight of the day before class is to meet—I will read them before class and may incorporate some of them into our discussion.

With all of your work, be sure to follow Bowdoin standards of conduct regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate dean.

Course grade will be determined as follows:

Three Papers:	60%
Class participation	15%
Final	25%

Reading assignments:

Jan. 22 Introduction

The Revolution and the Founding

Jan. 24 The First Founding:
- *Democracy in America*, Part 1, ch. 2 (scan provided)
- Mayflower Compact
- Model of Christian Charity, Winthrop
- On Liberty, Winthrop
(all on Blackboard)

Jan. 29 Revolution and Independence
-Letters from Pennsylvania Farmer (selections), Dickinson
-*Second Treatise on Government* (selections), Locke
-Declaration of Independence
 (All on Blackboard)

Jan. 31 The Liberal Republic
- Articles of Confederation (In Kessler)
- Constitution of the United States (In Kessler)
-*Spirit of the Laws* (selections), Montesquieu (Blackboard)

Feb. 5 The Anti-Federalists
-Selections from “Brutus” (Blackboard)

Feb. 7
-Selections from “Federal Farmer”, “Brutus”, Patrick Henry (Blackboard)

Feb. 12 Federalist Defense of the New Founding
- *Federalist Papers* # 1, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23

Feb. 14
-Letter to Samuel Kercheval, Jefferson (Blackboard)
- *Federalist Papers* # 37, 39, 47, 48, 49, 51

Feb. 19
- *Federalist Papers* # 55, 57, 58, 62, 63

Feb. 21
- *Federalist Papers* # 68, 70, 71, 72, 78, 84

Feb. 26
-Hamilton: Report on Manufactures
-Hamilton: Argument for Constitutionality of Bank
-Jefferson: Opinion on Constitutionality of Bank
(All on Blackboard)

Feb. 28
-Pacificus-Helvidius Debate
-Washington’s Farewell Address

-Letter to Danbury Baptists, Jefferson
(All on Blackboard)

Mar. 4: First Paper Due

Tocqueville on American Life

Mar. 5
-*Democracy in America* pp. 3-15, 45-65

Mar. 7
-*Democracy in America*, pp. 172-190, 212-214, 225-229, 231-249

SPRING BREAK

Mar. 26
-*Democracy in America*: pp. 275-288, 403-410, 417-428

Mar 28
-*Democracy in America*: pp. 479-484, 489-492, 500-509, 521-522, 640-645, 661-673

The Crisis of the House Divided

Apr. 2
-Introduction, xi-xxiii
-Lyceum Speech, Jan. 27, 1838, pp. 7-14
-Temperance Address, Feb. 22, 1842, pp. 14-22
-Eulogy on Henry Clay, July 6, 1852, pp. 43-54
-Address from Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Sept. 30, 1859, pp. 268-278
(All in Lincoln/Smith)

Apr. 4
Class Cancelled

Apr. 9
-Selection from Steven Douglas from Lincoln-Douglas Debate (Blackboard)
In Lincoln/Smith:
-Fragments on Slavery, [1854?] p. 58
-Peoria Speech, Oct. 16, 1854, pp. 59-92
-Dred Scott Speech, June 26, 1857, pp. 108-119

Apr. 11

-Selection from Alexander Stevens, "Cornerstone Speech" (Blackboard)

In Lincoln/Smith:

- House Divided Speech, June 16, 1858, pp. 126-133
- On Slavery and Democracy, p. 150
- Pro-Slavery Theology, [1858?] p. 189
- Letter to H.L. Pierce, and Others, Apr. 6, 1859, pp. 243-244
- Fragment, [1861?] pp. 321-322
- Cooper Institute Speech, Feb. 27, 1860, pp. 283-298
- Speech at New Haven, Mar. 6, 1860, pp. 299-314

Apr. 15: Second Paper Due

Apr. 16

- First Inaugural, Mar. 4, 1861, pp. 324-332
 - Meditation on Divine Will, pp. 362-363
 - Annual Message, Dec. 1, 1862, beginning at bottom of p. 384 to 392
 - Final Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863, pp. 395-396
 - Gettysburg Address, Nov. 19, 1863, p. 417
 - Letter to Albert Hodges, Apr. 4, 1864, pp. 418-419
 - Second Inaugural, Mar. 4, 1865, pp. 428-430
 - Speech on Reconstruction, Apr. 11, 1865, pp. 431-434
- (All in Lincoln/Smith)

Racism and Civil Rights

Apr. 18 (Note: all readings from here to the end of the semester are on Blackboard)

- "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln", Douglass
- "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?", Douglass
- "What the Black Man Wants", Douglass

Apr. 23

- "Civil Disobedience", Thoreau
- "Letter From a Birmingham Jail", MLK
- "Mountaintop Speech", MLK
- "The Ballot or the Bullet", Malcolm X

Modern Progressivism and Conservatism

Apr. 25

- "What is Progress?", Wilson

- “The Future of Liberalism”, Dewey
- “The Commonwealth Club Address”, FDR
- 1941 State of the Union (selection), FDR
- 1944 State of the Union (selections), FDR

Apr. 30

- “Port Huron Statement”, SDS
- “The Great Society”, LBJ
- Keynote Address, 2004 DNC”, Obama
- Second Inaugural Address, Obama

May 2

- “A Time for Choosing”, Reagan
- Four Heads, One Heart”, James Caesar

May 6: Third Paper due

May 7

- Selection from *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom

May 14 Final Exam