UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
POL S 3600-80
AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT
Spring, 2017

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Office hours: Tuesday 1-2:30 p.m., Thursday 1-2:30 p.m., and by appointment.
This class meets from 9:35 to 11 a.m. on Tuesday and Thursday mornings via the Zoom web-based platform.
This course fulfills the University’s WB requirement from the 2003 USP structure.

Course Description: This course examines key primary sources and traditions in American Political Thought, from the Founding Era to the present. We will analyze the key problems, both practical and intellectual, that have motivated that thought, while also discussing the sources and enduring intellectual influences upon the American political tradition. The documents that embody US political thought are broad, and hence we will read formal legal documents (such as the Constitution and Supreme Court decisions), speeches, declarations, and manifestos. Students will be exposed to a range of thinkers within each of these periods and will be asked to grapple with the contending values that animate much of American political thought: liberty and order, unity and diversity, equality and exclusion, democracy and expertise.

This is a survey course--one in which several perspectives will be introduced. While we will attempt to cover these perspectives as thoroughly as possible, inevitably we will be unable to do justice to any one perspective, much less all possible viewpoints.

Required Readings:


Please bring the text we are reading to class.

Course Requirements:

Writing Assignments: 40% of the course grade.
In this course, students will need to write a single, significant paper. We will go through an extensive process, however, in arriving at the final version of this paper. This course fulfills the Writing 2 (WB) requirement of the 2003 University Studies Program. Intermediate writing courses (WB) provide students with opportunities to further develop and refine their writing. These courses require writing for a variety of purposes and audiences, including the use of
discipline-based or interdisciplinary research skills to locate, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information in at least one extensive writing assignment. In WB courses, students further refine their writing through revision and editing, and practice the accepted conventions of Standard English. The process laid out in this course for the writing assignments is designed to meet the goals of WB courses. Please note that this course does not fulfill any designation for the 2015 University Studies Program.

Each student will need to write a proposal for what his or her paper will cover. This proposal should be one-half to one page in length. It should cover what the topic will be, which must be something that the course goes into at some length, and it must talk about why that topic is of interest or significance. Finally, the student should convey a sense of what the argument of the paper will be, while realizing that sometimes one’s argument changes significantly during the writing process. In many ways this paper proposal should be similar to an article abstract. Your paper proposal is due to me by noon on 10 March.

The paper itself should draw not only on the assigned readings in the class and class lectures and discussions, but also on research in the field. This should include scholarly articles and monographs. (You should not rely on polemical pieces, especially from persons who make a living via political commentary, e.g., Ann Coulter, Michael Moore, etc.) Your first draft should be approximately 8-10 pages in length and should follow the Chicago style of citation. Please note that your paper needs to have writing that is clear and grammatical in order to receive an acceptable grade. Your first draft is due to me on 13 April by noon.

The next stage in the writing process in this class is peer review. I will randomly assign a peer reviewer for each student. You will be notified as to who your reviewer is and his or her email address. When you send your paper into me, you also need to send it to your peer reviewer. Each reviewer has a week to read over the paper and write up constructive comments as to how that paper could be improved. Grammatical and typographical corrections are also welcome. When you have written up your peer review comments, send them to the paper's author and to me. Your peer review comments should be probably at least a page in length, and comments and corrections in a marked-up electronic version of the document would be helpful too. I will grade the quality of your peer review. It is due one week after the first drafts have been submitted, 20 April by noon.

Each of you will thus have a peer review set of remarks as well as my comments on your paper by the end of 22 April, although I will aim to get mine to you a day or two earlier than that. You will then have a week to incorporate those revisions that you see as appropriate. Please note that this round of revision is very likely to include extensions of the argument or other significant revisions. This final version should be approximately 10-12 pages in length. Your final draft is due on 27 April by noon.

The grade weight of each portion of this process is as follows:
- Paper proposal: 5%
- First draft: 10%
- Peer review of draft: 5%
- Final paper: 20%

Due Dates: All assignments related to your writing projects are due to me (either by hand to my office or via email) by noon on the due date. Papers need to be submitted in Word. Papers and other assignments submitted in an unreadable
format will be treated as late. Late assignments will have 20% of the possible points deducted for each day they are late.

Participation: 30% of the course grade.
Course participation includes preparation, attendance, and verbal participation.

Attendance Policy: Students will be allowed three absences. Thereafter, all unexcused absences will result in a 10 point reduction of your semester grade. Absences for documented medical reasons, documented emergencies, and UW sanctioned events will be excused.

Preparation and Verbal Participation: Students are expected to come to class prepared and willing to verbally participate. These factors, and the student’s general engagement in the course, will be included in the final determination of a student’s participation grade.

Midterm Exam: 10% of the course grade.
The midterm exam will be an online, proctored exam. It will include an essay question or questions, in addition to identification terms.

Final Exam: 20% of the course grade.
The final exam will have the same structure as the midterm, although it will be larger in scope.

There are 500 points possible for the semester.

Grading: All written assignments and exams will be graded using the following scale:
- 93-100 A
- 77-79 C+
- 90-92 A-
- 73-76 C
- 87-89 B+
- 70-72 C-
- 83-86 B
- 67-69 D+
- 80-82 B-
- 63-66 D
- 60-62 D-
- < 60 F

Final grades, however, will be given solely on an A, B, C, etc., scale.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty (including plagiarism, multiple submission, and all other offenses listed under University Regulation 802 rev 2) will not be tolerated. Any violations of University policy will be handled through University procedures explained at http://www.uwyo.edu/a&s/AppealsDishonesty/GuidelinesDishonesty

Punishment for violations of academic dishonesty standards will vary according to the severity of the offense. Generally, at the low end they will be a zero for the assignment; at the high end they will be an F for the semester. In addition, violators will be reported to the Judicial Affairs office under the Dean of Students. Two infractions being reported to this office typically result in that student being ejected from the University.

Accommodations for persons with documented disabilities require student registration with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, room 330 Knight Hall, 766-6189, TTY 766-3073. Please make every effort to register and inform me of your needs as soon as possible.

Please note that the schedule below is subject to change. If I do change it, however, it will only be in the direction of reducing assigned reading (and the dates on which we discuss those readings). I pledge to not add reading to what is listed below.
Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change):

Tuesday, Jan. 24: Introductions, assessments, and administration. The goals of this course.

Thursday, Jan. 26: Rights, self-government, and the Declaration of Independence:

Required Reading: Jefferson “A Summary View of the Rights of British America” (249-256 in Classics, Vol.1); Jefferson’s original draft of the Declaration (at http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/declara/ruffdrft.html)

Tuesday, Jan. 31: The final version of the Declaration of Independence, in Classics, pp.xvii-xix.

Thursday, Feb. 2: The Articles of Confederation:
The Articles of Confederation (332-336);

Tuesday, February 7: The defects of the Articles: James Madison “Vices of the Political System of the United States” (370-374); Madison, Letter to George Washington (374-375).

Thursday, February 9: The United States Constitution, in Classics, pp.xx-xxvi (you don’t need to read the Amendments at this point).


Thursday, Feb. 16: Founding Principles: Representation, Federalism, Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances

Federalist Papers #’s 39, 48, 51.

Tuesday, Feb. 21: The Senate, Presidency, and Judiciary: Federalist Papers #’s 55, 57, 62, 63.

Thursday, Feb 23: Federalist Papers #’s 70, 71, 73, and 78.

Tuesday, February 28: Founding Principles: The Anti-Federalist Response

Brutus Essays (534-558);

Thursday, March 2: The Anti-Federalist Response, continued:

Dissent of the Pennsylvania Minority, at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/bdsdce::@field(DOCID+@lit(bdsdecc0401))

Tuesday, March 7: The Bill of Rights; Economics and Citizenship


Thursday, March 9: Midterm exam.
March 15 and 17: Spring Break. No classes.

Tuesday, March 21: The Legitimacy of Political Parties:


Tuesday, March 28: The Gilded Age and Economic Transformation:

Thursday, March 30: New Social Movements:

Tuesday, April 4: The Progressive Era:

Thursday, April 6: The New Deal and the birth of a new conservatism.

Tuesday, April 11: The New Left and 1960s protest politics.

Thursday, April 13: Class canceled. Pickett at Western Political Science Association Conference

Tuesday, April 18: Civil Rights:
King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” pp.653-662; Baldwin v. Buckley, “Debate at Cambridge University,” 684-689. (Please note that a video of the latter is available on YouTube. I highly recommend watching it. It provides a rather different take on the debate than just the transcript.)

Thursday, April 20: Contemporary constitutional law debates, the right to privacy:
Read Douglas, Goldberg, Harlan, Black, Blackmun, Rehnquist, and White, pp.739-758.

Tuesday, April 25: The revival of American political philosophy:

Thursday, April 27: Constitutional law and the right to privacy, again:
Read Kennedy, Scalia, and Thomas, pp.929 to 940.
Tuesday, May 2: Contemporary racial and gender politics:
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” at:
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/
Sarah Jaffe, “Trickle-Down Feminism”
https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/trickle-down-feminism

Thursday, May 4: review for final exam.

May 8 and 9: Online final (proctored).