

American Political Thought

AS.191.202 – Summer 2017 (Term II)

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 3:00–5:15PM; Gilman 134

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Course Description

This course offers an introduction to American Political Thought. American Political Thought is an ongoing – and contentious – conversation about the meaning of and relationship between liberalism, democracy, race, gender, pluralism, violence, and the rule of law in the United States. The course explores these issues in three units. The first unit, “America at the Founding,” examines the principles, concepts, and debates that shaped the American system of federal government during and after the Revolutionary War. The second unit, “Democratizing America,” investigates 19th century debates over democratic citizenship in light of the country’s history of slavery, the exclusion of women from public life, and the rise of a modern industrial economy. The third unit, “20th Century Questions and Traditions,” introduces some of the most dynamic American political theorists in the 20th century and beyond: pragmatist John Dewey, anarchist Emma Goldman, civil rights icons Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, and contemporary African American thinkers Cornel West and Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Texts to Purchase

Please purchase **hard-copy versions** of the **editions/translations listed below**. The books are all available online and on 24 hour reserve at the library. Do not use Kindle or E-book versions (see Electronic Devices policy below). All other readings will be posted on E-Reserves or Blackboard.

1. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. (Yale University Press) ISBN: 978-0300195828
2. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist*. (Modern Library Classics) ISBN: 978-0375757860
3. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*. (Penguin Classics) ISBN: 978-0140390162
4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence. (Harper Perennial Modern Classics) ISBN: 978-0061127922

Course Requirements

Participation (40%)

Presentation (5%)

Analytical Essays (3) (30%)

Final Exam (25%)

Class Participation – This is a discussion-based seminar course, and class participation constitutes the largest part of the final grade (40%). Students should come to each class meeting having read the day’s assignments carefully and thoughtfully, and they should be prepared to engage in discussion with others. Regular student participation is essential, and evaluation will be based on the frequency and quality of participation.

In order to facilitate discussion, students must come to each class prepared to share one short discussion question. Questions should focus on a concept or issue in the day's reading that the student finds puzzling or provocative. A good discussion question stimulates conversation among the class as a whole.

Absences – Because the course depends crucially on active student participation, absences will be penalized heavily. Three (3) points will be deducted from the student's final grade (out of 100) for each unexcused absence. If an emergency arises, students **must** e-mail the instructor **prior** to the start of class.

Presentations – Each student will make one ten to fifteen minute in-class presentation that comprises 5% of the final grade. A presentation should identify the main points of the day's readings and pose several questions for class discussion. At the end of the presentation, the student will lead class discussion for ten to fifteen minutes.

Analytical Essays – Three (3) 500 word analytical essays comprise 30% of the final grade (10% each). A successful essay accomplishes three tasks in a short space: (1) it describes the main issue (or *question*) raised by a reading; (2) it identifies the author's argument (or *answer* to that question); and (3) it explains the significance of that argument (why it is important). The purpose of this assignment is to practice identifying, describing, and explaining the core theoretical argument of a text, *not* to evaluate an author's views or advance an original thesis. We will begin the first two essays together in class on 7/6 and 7/13, and students will submit their completed essays both by email **and** hard copy by the beginning of the following Monday's class meeting. The third essay can be written on any remaining reading and should be submitted at the beginning of class on the day that reading is assigned. No late assignments will be accepted.

Final Exam – There will be a final exam on the last day of class that evaluates the student's ability to synthesize and discuss the main texts and issues covered in the course. The format of the exam will be discussed in class. The final exam comprises 25% of the final grade.

Course Policies

Electronic Devices – In order to facilitate a focused and engaged class discussion, no electronic devices (laptops, tablets, E-readers, phones, etc.) are allowed in lecture or discussion section. Students should bring all readings to class in hard-copy form.

Plagiarism – Your work must be your own. All direct quotes must appear in quotation marks, and all quotes and paraphrases require author and page number citations. Remember that citations are often required even when you do not quote a work directly. Please consult the instructor if you have any questions. Any instances of plagiarism will be taken seriously.

Accessibility – Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

* = Reading on E-Reserves

** = Reading on Blackboard

INTRODUCTION

- July 3 Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Ch. 1)*
 Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America.”*
 Barack Obama, “Second Inaugural Address”**
 Donald Trump, “Inaugural Address”**

UNIT 1: AMERICA AT THE FOUNDING

- July 5 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (pp. 61–128)
 Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence” (in *The Federalist*, pp. 567–71)
- July 6 Abigail Adams and John Adams, “Correspondence on Women’s Rights”*
 Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”**
 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (pp. 132–70)*
- July 10 Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* (no. 1, 9, 11, 15, 35, 70, 78, 84, 85)
- July 12 James Madison, *The Federalist* (no. 10, 14, 39, 47, 48, 51, 54, 62, 63)

UNIT 2: DEMOCRATIZING AMERICA?

The New American Democracy

- July 13 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (pp. 9–20, 31–60, 173, 246–61)
- July 17 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (pp. 277–400; 408–13)
- July 19 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (pp. 417–18, 429–33, 442–49, 452–54, 459–68, 477–82, 503–17, 530–38, 551–58, 572–80, 582–84, 600–603, 634–45, 667–79)

Democratic Individualism

- July 20 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”*
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Politics”*
 Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”*
 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Address Delivered at Seneca Falls”*
 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Solitude of Self”*

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"**

Reconstruction and Democratic Leadership

July 24 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (pp. 5–74)

July 26 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (pp. 74–164)

UNIT 3: 20TH CENTURY QUESTIONS AND TRADITIONS

Pragmatism and Democracy

July 27 John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (pp. 110–84)*

Anarchism, Anti-Capitalism, and Violence

July 31 Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For"*

Emma Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence"*

Emma Goldman, "Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty"*

Civil Rights, (Non-)Violence, and White Supremacy

August 2 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail"*

Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"*

Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Introduction)*

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Nonviolence as Compliance"***

AUGUST 3 – FINAL EXAM