

Politics 220: American Political Thought

Whitman College, Fall 2009
Mon/Weds 2:30-3:50
Maxey Hall Room 303

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to the major themes and ideas of American political thought. We will explore the chief philosophical currents in the American tradition and study the ways in which that tradition has been shaped by historical event and conflicts. In particular, we will examine the ways in which the nation's core principles, commitments and institutions have been influenced by historical conflicts. We will discuss such questions as to whether there can be said to be a distinctively American tradition of political theory and whether there is a distinctively American identity, and, if so, what are the features of this Americanness? How has the category of "American" responded to demands for inclusion and reform? We will also focus on some core tensions in American political thought: republicanism and liberalism, individualism and communitarianism, American exceptionalism and American indebtedness to European political thought. We will approach these questions through a chronological reading of a variety of different texts, speeches and historical documents.

Required Books

The following books are available for purchase from the Whitman College Bookstore or from a wide variety of online vendors.

Dewey, John, *The Public and its Problems* (Ohio University)
Du Bois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk* (Penguin)
Franklin, Benjamin, *The Autobiography and Other Writings* (Penguin)
Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (Penguin)
Lincoln, Abraham, *Great Speeches* (Dover)
Sumner, William Graham, *What the Social Classes Owe To Each Other* (Caxton)

Additional readings will be available for download from Cleo. These are marked in the syllabus with an *asterisk.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: 20%

It is essential that all students come to class having read the assigned reading and prepared to participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance and your participation in class discussions and in-class activities. Your discussion grade will take into account your attendance, your comments during class discussion, the questions you ask, your responses to other students' questions and comments, and your performance on any in-class oral assignments. I expect students to respond thoughtfully to the assigned readings and to questions posed in class, to be willing to play with ideas (i.e., take interpretive risks) and be actively engaged in class discussion; therefore, the quality of your contributions to class discussions will be as important as the sheer quantity of your participation.

I will ask you to bring discussion questions to class throughout the semester—these questions and other informal forms of participation will be factored into your participation grade.

Essay Assignments 80%

You will write 3 5-7 page essays over the course of the semester. These will be analytic, critical essays that challenge you to think deeply and critically about the texts and the problems that emerge from them. I will distribute essay questions in class before each paper is due and you will be expected to respond thoughtfully and critically to the writing question and to draw heavily on the assigned readings in your responses. These are *not* research papers and I do not want or expect you to consult outside sources. I will give more specific instructions for your written work when I distribute the questions for the first essay assignment.

The first 2 essays are each worth 25% of your grade. The final essay will be worth 30%.

Late papers will be penalized one half grade for each day the paper is late. If you anticipate that you will not be able to submit your paper by the due date, I urge you to speak to me before the paper is due. Failure to discuss an extension with me prior to the due date will result in the abovementioned grade deductions.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours in Maxey 120A during the following times:

Monday 11-12
Wednesday 10-11
Thursday 11-12

If you cannot make it to my regularly scheduled office hours, I will be happy to schedule an appointment with you at another time.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the Whitman College Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism policy. The policy can be found in your Student Handbook and online at http://www.whitman.edu/content/academic_resources/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-dishonesty-and-plagiarism. I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Students and any student found to have plagiarized will automatically fail the course.

Reading Schedule

Weds 9/2	Introduction <u>American Foundings: Myths, Principles & Institutions</u>
Mon 9/7	*John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity" *D. H. Lawrence, "The Spirit of Place"
Weds 9/9	Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i> , 3-77
Mon 9/14	Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i> 77-171
Weds 9/16	*Jefferson, selected letters *Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence"
Mon 9/21	Federalist Papers, 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 27, 28, 31, 35

- Weds 9/23 Federalist Papers, 37, 39, 47, 48, 49, 51, 55, 58, 63, 70, 71, 78, 84, 85
- Mon 9/28 *Anti-Federalist Papers: Federal Farmer 1, 2, 7; Brutus 1, 4, 5; Centinel 1
- The House Divided: Race, Sectionalism and Civil War
- Weds 9/30 *Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"
- Fri 10/2 First Essay Due
- Mon 10/5 *Thoreau, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For", "Higher Laws" and "Conclusion" from *Walden*
*Louisa May Alcott, "Transcendental Wild Oats"
- Weds 10/7 *Henry Lloyd Garrison, "The American Union"
*Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
- Mon 10/12 Mid-semester break—no classes
- Weds 10/14 *John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions" and *A Disquisition on Government* (selections)
- Mon 10/19 Lincoln, "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions", "House Divided Speech" (pp. 1-8 24-32)
- Weds 10/21 Lincoln, "Address at Cooper Institute," "First Inaugural Address," "Message to Congress in Special Session," "Gettysburg Address," "Second Inaugural Address" (pp. 35-51, 53-75, 103-4, 106-8)
- Liberalism and Capitalism in the Gilded Age
- Mon 10/26 *Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"
- Weds 10/28 *Mark Twain, "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg",
*Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth"
- Mon 11/2 Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other* (1-96)
- Weds 11/4 Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other* (97-145)
- Fri 11/6 Second Essay Due
- Reform: Populism, Progressivism and Beyond
- Mon 11/9 *"The Omaha Platform" (Populist Party platform)
*William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold"
*Thomas Frank, "Lie Down for America"
- Weds 11/11 Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address"
Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chs 1, 3-5 (pp 1-12, 36-73)
- Mon 11/16 Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chs 6, 8-10, 12-14 (pp. 74-90, 111-68, 176-217)
- Weds 11/18 Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, Introduction and pp. 3-74
- Fri 11/20 Thanksgiving Break
- Mon 11/30 Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, pp. 75-142
- Weds 12/2 Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, pp. 143-220
- Mon 12/7 *Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
*Martin Luther King Jr, "Black Power Defined"
*Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Weds 12/9 *Rogers Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America"
*Wendell Berry, "The Unsettling of America"

Mon 12/14 Final Essay Due: My Office at High Noon