

Political Science 185
Fall 2005
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American Political Thought

COURSE:

We often assume that people are motivated by self-interest. They support particular policies because it will benefit them. And clearly, interests do explain much about the political world. But the political world is also about ideas. How we (and others) conceive of the world, how we explain and justify it, also shapes the kinds of politics we get. Ideas matter. The way we frame issues, the ideas we have about what is important and what is not, and our conceptions of different political, legal or moral ideas and connections all affect the ebb and flow of politics. This class explores the ideas that underlie politics in America. We will examine the ideas and philosophies that form the roots of the various political cultures that have existed, and do exist, in the United States. The class will be historical in approach, beginning with the founding of the new nation working up to contemporary times. But it also will be thematic, exploring how concepts such as "rights," "liberty," "equality," and "democracy," have shaped American political development. It is my hope that by the end of the semester we will all have a better sense of the meanings of these concepts and what we think about them, and we will have a more critical appreciation for the values and ideas that shape, and will continue to shape, our political system. I also hope that this course will be a joint venture. If you come to class, sit in your seats, take notes, and spit back what I say in your essays and exam, none of us will be any better off than we were before the class began. If you come to class prepared, raise questions, discuss the issues and think critically about the topics we discuss, both you and I will enjoy the course much more.

For more information about other course offerings and policies of the Department of Political Science, see the Department's [home page](#).

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Regular attendance, preparation for, and participation in class discussions. You are expected to have the readings done by the day on which they are assigned. Please note that at times it may seem that we are falling behind the syllabus. However, unless I tell you otherwise, keep up with the reading as assigned. Some of these "lags" are by design. And we will, at some point, catch up. I will take attendance (If you are absent, I will assume you are not prepared). 10%.
2. There will be five analytic essays assigned throughout the semester. These essays will ask you to critically examine some of the ideas and philosophies that have shaped the development of politics in the United States. In this, as in all of your papers (and exams), you are expected to follow principles of academic honesty in your work. For more information about [academic dishonesty](#), see the discussion in the Political Science Department Home Page. Each of these essays is worth 15% of the grade.
3. There will be a final exam (essay style) on Tuesday, December 13th worth 15% of your grade. Part of this exam may be take-home in nature, but at least one question will be done in-class.

READINGS:

There are three books available for purchase at the University Bookstore. They are:

Dolbeare, Kenneth and Cummings, Michael, *American Political Thought* (5th Edition)

Shafer, Byron and Badger, Anthony, *Contesting Democracy: Substance and Structure in American Political History*

White, John Kenneth, *The Values Divide*

I recommend that you read a daily newspaper to keep up with what is going on in current American politics. You will find that the ideas and

philosophies we examine are important in shaping the various political debates and disputes that are occurring and in our discussions we may make reference to such debates.

ASSIGNMENTS:

I. The Founding: Ideological Origins of the American Republic:

August 23: Introduction

August 25: Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part I.

August 30: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 1, 2: Winthrop and Wise.

September 1: No class. I will be out of town.

September 6: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 3, 4, 5, 6: Franklin, Adams, Paine and the Declaration of Independence.

September 8: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 7, 9: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States.

September 13: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapter 8: John Adams.

September 15: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapter 10: In Favor of Adoption of the Constitution.

September 20: Dolbeare and Cummings: chapter 11: Against Adoption of the Constitution.

September 22: Shafer and Badger: chapter 1; Dolbeare and Cummings: Chapter 12, 13: Hamilton and Jefferson.

September 27: *Essay 1: The Roots of American Politics: Due in class.*

II. The Development of American Democracy: Building a Nation, Confronting Slavery and Civil War:

September 29: Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part II, chapters 14, 15, 16; Marshall, Brownson and Thoreau.

October 4: No class: Rosh Hashanah.

October 6: Shafer and Badger, chapter 2; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 17, 28, 21; Stanton, Douglass and Lincoln.

October 11: Shafer and Badger, chapter 3; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 19, 20; Calhoun and Fitzhugh.

October 13: No class. Yom Kippur.

October 18: No class. Mid-semester break.

October 20: *Essay 2: Confronting Slavery: Due in class.*

III. Industrialization and Economic Growth:

October 25: Shafer and Badger, chapter 4; Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part III, chapter 22: The Civil War Constitutional Amendments and the Failure of the "Sixteenth Amendment."

October 27: No class. I will be out of town.

November 1: Shafer and Badger, chapter 5; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 23, 24, 25, 26; Sumner, Bellamy, Populism and Lloyd.

November 3: *Essay 3: Confronting Industrialization: Due in class.*

IV. The Rise of Active Government:

November 8: Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part IV, chapters 30, 31, 32; Du Bois, Goldman and Debs.

November 10: Shafer and Badger, chapter 6; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 33, 34, 35, 36; Croly, Progressivism, Taylor and Wilson.

November 15: Shafer and Badger, chapter 7; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 37, 38; Dewey and Roosevelt.

November 17: *Essay 4: The New Deal: Due in class.*

V. The Post-War Era: The Rise of Modern Liberalism and Conservatism and Contemporary Conflict:

November 22: Shafer and Badger, chapter 8; Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part 5, chapters 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46; Kennedy, King, SDS, Friedan, Lasch and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

November 24: No class. Thanksgiving (Enjoy your turkey or a vegetarian alternative).

November 29: Shafer and Badger, chapter 9; White, Introduction, chapters 1, 2; Dolbeare and Cummings: chapters 44, 48, 52, 56; Reagan, Loury, Buchanan and Bush.

December 1; White, chapters 3,4,5; Dolbeare and Cummings: Introduction to Part VI, chapters 49, 50, 51; McGuire and McGuire, Clinton and Jordan.

December 6: White, chapters 6, 7.

December 8: *Essay 5: Divided America? Due in class.*

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 13: 2:00-3:50.