Political Science 566: Contemporary American Political Thought  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Spring 2014

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Office Hours: Tues. 11:00-12:00; Wed. 10:00-11:00 and by appointment

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Course Description:  
This course considers central themes and controversies in American political thinking during the 20th and early 21st centuries. Topics include the development of liberalism from the Progressive Era to the New Deal to the Great Society and beyond; the emergence of new strands of conservatism after World War II and the tensions between those strands; challenges by excluded and marginalized groups to the traditional social and political order; and the revival of concerns about “community” in America. As a topic of study, “American Political Thought” combines philosophy, political theory, history, and practical politics. We will thus read a wide variety of texts, ranging from philosophical treatises to newspaper articles, from presidential addresses to works of social science. Our ultimate goal is to become more knowledgeable and more critical students of the American political experience.

This term, PS 566 will be taught in a blended learning format. This means that part of the course will be face-to-face and part will be online. Each section of the course meets for one 75 minute class session per week. That class session will be devoted to active learning, including group work, class discussion, problem solving activities, simulations, etc—all designed to help deepen our consideration of our shared readings. The online component of the course will include weekly introductory material and an interactive critical reader activity, both designed to help you engage in a meaningful way with the assigned readings (all of which will be primary texts). Students will also participate in a structured online team discussion forum and work on team and individual projects.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students in PS 566 will:

- **KNOW** key ideas and arguments in contemporary American political thought.
- **ANALYZE** the relationship between contemporary American political thought and the American founding.
- **EVALUATE** recent political rhetoric in the context of contemporary American political thought.
- **CREATE** a rigorous account of their own political thinking in the context of key ideas and arguments in contemporary American political thought.
**Course Materials:**
The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. Because we will be directing close attention to specific passages as part of our work, and because assignments will require close readings and often quotations of individual works, it is important that you buy the editions listed. When in doubt, check the ISBN number. Additional readings will be available through Learn@UW.


**Course Requirements, Assignments & Grading**

Each week of our course involves face-to-face sessions, assigned readings, and a set of online activities. These various components of the course complement one another. To do well in the course, you need to engage fully with all of them. Part of your course grade will be based on your participation, both in our face-to-face meetings and online. Weekly, low stakes online quizzes will assess your engagement with course readings and the online material. There will be a total of 12 online quizzes; we will set aside your two lowest scores and base your overall quiz grade on your highest ten scores.

You will work with fellow students on two team projects. The first will result in an in-class presentation and an accompanying essay and will focus on the relationship of early 20th century American political thought to the political thought of the American founding. The second team project will similarly involve a presentation and an essay and will focus on recent political rhetoric. I will assign teams, and teams will be different for the first and second projects.

In addition, you will complete two individual projects. The first will be an essay in which you bring your own political thinking into conversation with early 20th century American political thought. The second individual project will involve engaging with more recent thought and rhetoric.

I will distribute detailed descriptions of these assignments early in the term.

Course grades will be calculated approximately as follows, though I reserve the right to change assignments and weightings as necessary:

- Online and in-class participation: 10.0%  
- Weekly online quizzes: 10.0%  
- Team Project 1: 17.5%  
- Team Project 2: 17.5%  
- Individual Project 1: 20.0%  
- Individual Project 2: 25.0%

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:**

- Students needing special accommodations to enable full participation in this course should contact the instructor as early as possible. All information will remain confidential. You also may contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 1305 Linden Drive, (608) 263-2741 regarding questions about campus policies and services.

- You must complete all assignments to pass the course.
- Papers must be turned in by the stated deadline. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade (e.g. A to B, AB to BC) for each day they are late.

- Neither I nor the teaching assistant will discuss grades on presentations or papers for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours’ reflection, you have a concern about a grade, please approach your teaching assistant with a brief written explanation of your concern. Any concerns about grading must be raised with the teaching assistant no later than two weeks after the assignment has been returned. Note, too, that I consider the teaching assistant’s decisions on examination and paper grades to be final.

- Any instances of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be dealt with in full accordance with University policy and will result in a grade of “F” for the course.
Course Schedule

**Except when noted, all readings are from Kramnick and Lowi, American Political Thought**

1. **Introduction to Course**
   - F2F: Tuesday, January 21 & Wednesday, January 22

2. **The Progressives and the Founding**
   - Assigned readings:
     - Croly, Promise of American Life, Chapters 1-2, 4
   - Complete online activities by Monday, January 27
   - F2F: Tuesday, January 28 & Wednesday, January 29

3. **The Progressives and American Democracy**
   - Assigned Readings:
     - Croly, Promise of American Life, Chapters 5, 7-8
   - Complete online activities by Monday, February 3
   - F2F: Tuesday, February 4 & Wednesday, February 5

4. **The Progressives, Race and Imperialism**
   - Assigned Readings:
     - Croly, Promise of American Life, Chapters 9-10, 13
     - Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” pp. 588-597
   - Complete online activities by Monday, February 10
   - F2F: Tuesday, February 11 & Wednesday, February 12

5. **The New Deal**
   - Assigned Readings:
     - Franklin Delano Roosevelt, all selections, pp. 1164-1190
     - Herbert Hoover, all selections, pp. 1133-1146
   - Complete online activities by Monday, February 17
   - F2F: Tuesday, February 18 & Wednesday, February 19
6. Post-War Conservatism I
   • Assigned Readings:
   • Complete online activities by Monday, February 24
   • F2F: Tuesday, February 25 & Wednesday, February 26

7. Post-War conservatism II
   • Assigned Readings:
     Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement,” pp. 1281-1282
     George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” pp. 1217-1221
     Whittaker Chambers, “Witness,” pp. 1231-1235
   • Complete online activities by Monday, March 3
   • F2F: Tuesday, March 4 & Wednesday, March 5

8. Team Presentations
   • No Assigned Readings
   • Complete online activities by Monday, March 10
   • F2F: Tuesday, March 11 & Wednesday, March 12

SPRING BREAK: No F2F on Tuesday, March 18 and Wednesday, March 19

9. Pluralism and the theory of the Power Elite
   • Assigned Readings:
     Daniel Bell, “The End of Ideology,” pp. 1277-1281
     C. Wright Mills, selections from *The Power Elite* (available on Learn@UW)
   • Complete online activities by Monday, March 24
   • F2F: Tuesday, March 25 & Wednesday, March 26

10. Feminism in the 1960s
    • Assigned readings:
      Betty Friedan, Selections from *The Feminine Mystique* (available on Learn@UW)
      Phyllis Schlafly, “The Power of the Positive Woman,” pp. 1404-1410
    • Complete online activities by Monday, March 31
    • F2F: Tuesday, April 1 & Wednesday, April 2
11. Civil rights and Race in the 1960s

- Assigned Readings:
  
  
  Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “Statement of Purpose,” p. 1321
  
  Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” 1322-1227
  
  Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics,” pp. 1328-1338
  
  Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation,” pp. 1339-1343
  
  
  Cornell West, “Race Matters,” pp. 1471-1476

- Complete online activities by Monday, April 7
- F2F: Tuesday, April 8 & Wednesday, April 9

12. Rethinking Liberalism I

- Assigned Readings:
  Rawls, Justice as Fairness, Parts 1 and 2

- Complete online activities by Monday, April 14
- F2F: Tuesday, April 15 & Wednesday, April 16

13. Rethinking Liberalism II

- Assigned Readings:
  Rawls, Justice as Fairness, Part 4
  
  Nozick, “Anarchy, State and Utopia,” pp. 1381-1391
  
  Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, “Free to Choose,” pp. 1411-1426

- Complete online activities by Monday, April 21
- F2F: Tuesday, April 22 & Wednesday, April 23

14. The Communitarian Response

- Assigned Readings:
  
  Michael Walzer, “What does it Mean to be an American?” pp. 1449-1463
  
  
  Amitai Etzioni, “Communitarianism and the Moral Dimension,” pp. 1511-1522

- Additional readings TBA

- Complete online activities by Monday, April 28
- F2F: Tuesday, April 29 & Wednesday, April 30

15. Team Presentations 2

- No assigned readings

- Complete online activities by Monday, May 5
- F2F: Tuesday, May 6 & Wednesday, May 7