History of American Political Thought
POLS 565, Fall Semester 2014

Instructor: Joshua Bandoch
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm or by appointment
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Course Location: Van Vleck B231
Course Time: TuTh 2:30 pm - 3:45 pm

Course Description

In this course we will explore key themes that have (re)defined life in this country since its beginning, such as liberty, democracy, religion, and race. We will examine the intellectual origins and evolution of American political thought as seen through the lens of leading politicians, novelists and social critics from the Puritans to the Civil War. We will read core documents like the Declaration of Independence, along with important works by thinkers like John Winthrop, the Founding Fathers, Tocqueville, and Lincoln. Our goal is to understand what they thought the American enterprise was and should be. Can the country meet their expectations, which are sometimes competing or contradictory? Throughout there will be considerations of the central tensions of American political thought from a contemporary perspective. This course assumes a basic familiarity with American government and history, that is, with important dates and events, as well as certain concepts and institutions.

Learning Goals

This course has two primary learning goals: first, to understand some of the most important political documents written on America, or by Americans, that shaped central intellectual debates throughout our history; second, to see the continued relevance of these documents to contemporary American politics.

To accomplish this, we will prepare thoroughly by reading the texts slowly and carefully. This is particularly important in political theory courses, because these works are not textbooks. They are a different kind of reading and require attention to detail as well as an ability to understand the broad implications of arguments. You must note the argument of the reading and its context. Allow sufficient time for the readings. In lectures and assignments, we are interested not only in laying out the arguments being made by the authors, but in assessing the merits of those claims. All assignments will require you to critically examine the texts to determine whether or not you think the author has made a sound claim. If you think any claims are unsound, you will need to explain why. Learning these skills translates to tasks you will undertake throughout life after college.

Academic Freedom:
- Students have the right to engage in reasoned, polite disagreement with the instructor with no penalty to their grades whatsoever.
- Everyone has the right to participate in a learning environment that emphasizes mutual respect, tolerance, and free inquiry. The classroom is a forum for critical discussion in the pursuit of truth.
- The instructor has the right to challenge any beliefs, world-views, ideology, or attitudes held by the students, even world-views that the students hold sacred. Students likewise have this right against the instructor and each other. Everyone, including those students with opinions in the intellectual minority here on campus, has the right to express his or her philosophical views without fear of bullying or reprisal.

Respect:

A free classroom environment requires an ethics of respect.

For me, this means that
- I will arrive in class on time, prepared to teach the material described in the syllabus.
- I will take student questions seriously and answer them to the best of my ability given the constraints of class time.
- I will keep my scheduled office hours or inform you in advance if I cannot. I will return written assignments in reasonable time with ample constructive criticism, comments, and an explanation of your grade.
- I will treat you as an adult. This means, in part, that I will take your philosophical and political views seriously. However, be aware that taking you seriously means that I will assume you have put thought into your views and will challenge you where appropriate. I will not push you to adopt my views.
- I will respect your time and not give you “busy work.”

For you, respect means that
- You will respect the opinions of your classmates and your instructor. You will treat everyone with courtesy, charity, and seriousness. You will not attempt to make others look foolish.
- You will come to class on time having read the assigned materials.
- You will turn in written assignments on time
- You will actively participate in class with the goal of making our time together as conducive to mutual learning as possible.

Required Texts:
The Federalist Papers, Hackett, ISBN: 978-0872207110
Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Chicago UP, ISBN: 978-0226805368
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Dover Publications, ISBN: 978-0486284996

Course Schedule and Topics

Intro, Early America: What, if anything, defines early American Political Thought? Is there anything distinct about it that makes it "American"? What role should religion play in politics? Do we see any of the seeds of the Revolution, or of later thinking, here?

September 2: Introduction
Section I

September 4: Mayflower Compact (1620) (http://www.allabouthistory.org/mayflower-compact.htm)
- John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630)
  (http://www.sageamericanhistory.net/colonial/docs/winthrop.htm)

Grounding the Founding: Intellectual Origins of the American Founding

September 9: John Locke, Second Treatise, Chs. 5, 8, 9, 11
  (http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)

September 11: John Locke, Second Treatise, Chs. 12, 14, 15, 18, 19
  (http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)

September 16: Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws, I, 3; IX, 1-4; XI, 1-6; XIX, 27; XX, 1-6
  (online)

Section II

Approaching the Revolution, Declaring Independence: What practices played the most significant role in causing the Revolution? What arguments did the Americans use to justify revolting?

September 18: English Bill of Rights (1689) (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/england.asp )
- Jonathan Mayhew, A Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to Higher Powers (1750) (online)

September 23: Declaration of Independence (1776)
  (http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.htm)
- Frederick Douglass, “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?”
  http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/

Revolting, Constituting, and then Reconstituting the Republic: What was the aim and purpose of the Articles? Of the Constitution? How did they differ? How can the Constitution be understood not only as a correction of the Articles, but as the founding of the American republic?

NB: Here is an excellent website with lots of good Founding documents: http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/

September 25: Articles of Confederation (1777 - drafted; 1781 - ratified)
  (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp)

September 30: U.S. Constitution (1787) (http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html)

Section III

October 2: The Federalist Papers, Nos. 1, 6, 9, 10

October 7: The Federalist Papers Nos. 14, 37, 39, 49;

October 9: The Federalist Papers, Nos. 47, 51
- “The Case for Suing the President” by David Rivkin Jr. and Elizabeth Price Foley, Wall Street Journal, June 30, 2014

October 14: The Federalist Papers, Nos. 70, 71, 72

October 16: The Federalist Papers, Nos. 78, 84

October 21: Jason Frank, Constituent Moments, Introduction, Chapters 1-2

October 23: Jason Frank, Constituent Moments, Chapters 4, 6, & conclusion

Section IV

Tocqueville on America: what makes America exceptional as per Tocqueville? What problems remain, or might arise? Is Tocqueville’s analysis still relevant?

October 28: Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (DA) (1835), Introduction, Volume One, Part One, Chapter 1

October 30: DA, Volume One, Part One, Chapters 2-5

November 4: DA, Volume One, Part One, Chapters 6-7; Volume One, Part Two, Chapters 1-2, 4

November 6: DA, Volume One, Part Two, Chapters 5-6 (except pages 203-210), 7-8

November 11: DA, Volume One, Part Two, Chapters 9, Chapter 10 pgs. 384-390

November 13: DA, Volume Two: Part One, Chapter 8; Part Two, Chapters 1-4, 8-11, 13, 16-17

November 18: DA, Volume Two, Part Three, Chapters 1, 11, 13, 19, 21; Part Four, Chapters 1, 6-8
Section V – (Re)Conceptualizing our Republic

Slavery - our darkest hour


*Tocqueville Paper Due Monday November 24

November 25: Thanksgiving Break. No Class.

December 2: Frederick Douglass, Narrative in the Life of Frederick Douglass

*Response paper due at beginning of class

Abraham Lincoln - Was he the most consequential president? What was his philosophy of governance?

December 4: Lyceum Address (1838) (http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm)
- Temperance Address (1852) (http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/temperance.htm)

December 9: House Divided Speech (1858) (http://www.ushistory.org/documents/housedivided.htm)
- First Inaugural (1861) (http://www.ushistory.org/documents/lincoln1.htm)
- Emancipation Proclamation (1863) (http://www.ushistory.org/documents/emancipation.htm)
- Gettysburg Address (1863) (http://www.ushistory.org/documents/gettysburg.htm)
- Second Inaugural (1865) (http://www.ushistory.org/documents/lincoln2.htm)

December 11: Conclusion

Course Requirements and Grading:

Attendance policy

So that we all gain the most from this class, you must participate actively with thoughtful questions, perspectives, and interpretations of texts and issues we discuss. Much of our learning will derive from our interactions with each other. To do this, you must be prepared for class, first by completing the readings before class. Leave enough time to reflect on the readings, and try to come up with questions or concerns you have about them. Do you agree with the author? Why or why not? Come to class ready to discuss your thoughts. Our discussions will always be for the sake of furthering our understanding of the important political and moral matters in the texts. Because these are difficult, complicated texts, please do not be afraid to raise any questions you have.
If you are not in class, then it will be difficult to participate intelligently. Only university approved excused absences are acceptable reasons for missing a class. If you know ahead of time you will miss a class, please inform me in advance, and arrange to obtain notes from another student. You also must email me a one page reading reaction within a week's time. This is not punitive, but rather is a way of having you engage the readings.

You are permitted two unexcused absences. For each additional unexcused absence, you will lose 2 points of your 10 points for participation.

Assignments

Oral Presentation                15 points  
Intelligent Participation        10 points  
Short critical analysis (300-400 words) 15 points  
900-1000 word response on Douglass 10 points  
1500-1700 word paper on Tocqueville 25 points  
1500-1700 word final paper        25 points

Papers

You are responsible for selecting your paper topics. In both papers, you will have to critically analyze texts and ideas. Not only do you have to show an understanding of the issues at hand, you also have to show a willingness to engage those ideas critically. In doing so, you will learn how to write more clearly and make arguments about complex ideas.

Each paper should be formatted in the following way: 12 pt font, Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, double spaced, stapled, formatter for blind review. You must include the word count at the end of the essay. NB: This is a strict word limit.

Typos: You must proofread your papers. For every 3 typos, you will lose 1 point

Late paper policy: For every day late, you lose 2 points.

Blind grading: this class will utilize blind grading for essays.

Short Critical Analysis

In the each of the five sections of the class, you have the opportunity to write a short critical analysis on the readings for one class period. You must turn this in at the beginning of class that day. In these analyses, you must hone in on an insight you have, or on an issue you think is worth investigating more. The point is not to summarize the readings. You may write one for each section, for a total of 5. I will count only your 3 best response papers.
**Grading Scheme**

A: 92+
AB: 87-92
B: 82-87
BC: 77-82
C: 70-77
D: 60-70
F: below 60

**Integrity**

Familiarize yourself with the university policy regarding academic integrity. (It’s available at http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/UWS14.pdf ) Do not violate it. Any form of cheating will result in failure of the course and a recommendation of suspension. If you are unsure about proper citation, check with me. Do not cheat in this class.

**Technology**

You may only use laptops during class to view readings, not to take notes. No cell phone usage is permitted during class.

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with me as soon as possible regarding accommodations.

**Writing Center:** Do consider visiting the Writing Center if you would like extra feedback.