

POLS 4040
Mon, Wed, & Fri: 2:30-3:20 p.m.
Baldwin 101D
Spring, 2018

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American Political Thought

Many claim that two features distinguish early American political thought from European political thought: an exceptional commitment to liberal, democratic, and republican political institutions on the one hand, and a peculiar attachment to racist and nativist practices on the other. This course traces the interaction of these two contradictory tendencies through the writings of prominent American political thinkers from the founding of the American republic through Reconstruction. It considers how history affects each writer and how their writings informed political philosophy and the design of American political institutions. Along the way, we will see the ideas that arose during the course of the American Revolution, the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, and ultimately the Civil War. Hopefully, students who take this course will have a thorough understanding of American political thought and become much better writers.

Grading

Unlike many of your other courses, this course is student-centered and interactive with professor and student on equal footing, debating and reflecting on the readings assigned. I will motivate some of the discussions with a background lecture or a random student brief, but I expect students to have read the work before class and to fully engage in classroom discussions. Your grade will consist of two reading briefs, an in-class simulation of the Constitutional Convention, a federalist debate, a sectional debate, a set of pop quizzes, and attendance. The class is very challenging, but I think you will have a lot of fun learning the material.

I generally think of 90-100 as an A, 80-90 as a B, etc., but the university moved to a plus minus system, so your overall grade for the course will be based upon the following scale:

	A	92 or above	A-	90-91.99
B+	B	82-87.99	B-	80-81.99
C+	C	72-77.99	C-	70-71.99
D+	D	62-67.99	D-	60-61.99
F		59.99 or below		

Reading Briefs

Reading briefs are two page, double spaced essays on a topic related to the readings. Unlike most essays, I will usually assign a reading brief on a topic that we have not yet discussed in class. Each brief is worth 10% of your overall grade. Briefs may be discussed in class to generate discussions. I *may* also ask you to read your brief in front of the class, so be prepared. **Students will lose one letter grade for every working day a brief is late and briefs will not be accepted one week after the due date.**

Simulation

One of the more exciting units in this course will be our simulation of the U.S. Constitutional Convention. To start the simulation, I will randomly assign each of you to be a different delegate from the Constitutional Convention. Your task will be to research the biography of your delegate, including their position on the apportionment of the legislature and the method of electing the President. We will then persuade your fellow delegates to vote in favor of your favorite position on the issue, or something close to it, and use bloc voting to decide the outcome of each issue for the class. You will be graded on a two page summary of your delegate's position on these two issues, your ability to get the outcome closer to the position favored by your delegate, as well as the quality of your participation in the simulation – worth 20% of your grade. **Students who are absent during one of the simulation days will turn in a 5 page paper summarizing the entire Convention's position on the issue they missed, in addition to their two page paper, due the next class. Students who miss both issues will write two 5 page papers plus the two page paper, due the next class. Your grade on the simulation will then be the average of these elements (assignment and penalty assignments). Late penalties apply (see "make-ups" below).**

Federalist Debates

Early in the course, you will be divided into groups and assigned to a specific debate as either a Federalist or an Anti-Federalist. These debates will force you to delve into the philosophical theory behind the United States Constitution and some important issues in democratic theory. You will be graded on a two page summary of your party's position on the issue (due for the first day of the debates, regardless of the day you are assigned), a presentation or refutation before the class, and your response to questions from the audience. These debates are enjoyable, but they also represent 20% of your grade. **Students who are not assigned to a debate (presumably because they haven't been coming to class) must turn in a 10 page essay which summarizes the philosophical tradition of the entire Federalist/Anti-Federalist debates, due on the first day of the debates. Students who turn in the 2 page paper for their debate but miss their debate for whatever reason, must turn in an 8 page paper on the philosophical tradition of the entire debates due in the class immediately following the student's assigned debate. Late penalties apply.**

Sectional Debates

Later in the course, you and your group will be assigned to a sectional debate between the North and the South on the nature of the union. If you were a Federalist in the previous debate, you will be a state's righter in the sectional debates. If you were an Anti-Federalist, you will represent the union. These debates were largely conducted in the U.S. Senate between 1830 and 1855. They addressed whether the states had the power of judicial review and whether the union could be dissolved. Your grade will be based on a 2 page summary of your party's position on your assigned issue, a classroom presentation, and your ability to respond to questions from the audience -- worth an additional 20% of your grade. As mentioned above, **students who are not assigned to a debate (because they haven't been coming to class) must turn in a 10 page essay which summarizes the philosophical tradition of the entire sectional debates, due on**

the first day of the debates. Students who turn in the 2 page paper for their debate but miss their debate for whatever reason, must turn in an 8 page paper on the philosophical tradition of the entire debates due in the class immediately following the student’s assigned debate. Late penalties apply.

Quizzes

15% of your grade is reserved for 4-7 pop quizzes designed to determine whether you have read the material for class. The perfect quiz is easy for someone who has done the readings and hard for someone who has not. Quizzes are supposed to motivate you to do the readings and attend class. You cannot expect to do consistently well on quizzes if you do not try to answer any reading questions assigned before class starts. Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. **Any student who misses a quiz will receive a zero and there will be no make-up for missed quizzes, including students who arrive to class late.** I will drop your lowest quiz grade. Your cumulative quiz grade will then be the average of the remaining quizzes.

Attendance

The remaining 5% of your grade will be based on your attendance – one point for every day attended.

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Percent of Grade</u>
Reading Brief (European influences)	Jan 29	10%
Simulation: Constitutional Convention	Feb 21 - 28	20%
Federalist Debates	Mar 19 - 21	20%
Reading Brief (slavery in the republic)	Apr 9	10%
Sectional Debates	Apr 13 - 20	20%
Quizzes	--	15%
Attendance	Jan 6 - Apr 25	5%

Make-ups

Late assignments will be lowered one letter grade for every *working* day they are late and will not be accepted more than a week late. In the case of the simulation and the debates, late penalties also pertain to the longer writing assignment described in their respective sections above. **There will be no make up for quizzes.** If an assignment is late, email it to me or stick it under my office door (Baldwin 418) as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary late penalties. Grades are lowered for every *working day* they are late, not every class day they are late.

Student Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about these standards before performing academic work. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an

acceptable defense. Note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course and that deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Required Texts

Readings are drawn mainly from primary source materials, which means we can get most online for free. However, two books are required for the course, which can be purchased from the book store or your favorite on-line distributor like Half Price Books or Amazon. Older versions are acceptable.

1. William Zinsser. 2006. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Non-Fiction*. Harper Publishing.
2. Max Farrand. 1962. *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States*. Yale University Press: Library of American Freedom edition.

Additional readings can be attained on-line. I recommend that everyone bring a lap top and read the other assignments on your computer. If you want to highlight, you can download a copy, convert it to adobe pdf or word, and use an electronic highlighter. We can then refer to passages in class by searching for specific words and phrases. If you don't have a lap top, printing them out and reading them the old fashioned way works just fine.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Writing Well

- Jan 5 Introduction
- Jan 8-12 *William Zinnser, *On Writing Well*, Introduction through Ch 11, "Nonfiction as Literature" (book). [Lecture notes](#).
- Jan 15 **No Class! MLK day**

European Influences

- Jan 17-19 *John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 1-6.
<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>
- Jan 22-24 *John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 7-8, 11-12, 16, 18-19.
<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>
- Jan 26 *David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, Part II, Essay XII, "Of The Original Contract"
<http://www.constitution.org/dh/origcont.htm>

Jan 29 *Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Book XIII, chapter III; Book XI, chapters I, IV, and VI.
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/837>
([brief 1 due](#))

Debate on the Stamp Act and the American Revolution

Jan 31 *James Otis, "[The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved](#)" (excerpts to shorten your reading)

Feb 2 *Patrick Henry, "Virginia Resolves on the Stamp Act"
http://www.constitution.org/bcp/vir_res1765.htm

*Daniel Dulaney, "[Considerations on the Propriety of imposing Taxes on the British Colonies for the Purpose of Raising a Revenue](#)"

*William Pitt, "Speech Against the Stamp Act"
<http://www.history.org/almanack/life/politics/pitt.cfm>

Feb 5 *Daniel Leonard, [Letter of January 9, 1775](#).

Feb 7-9 *The Declaration of Independence
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

*Thomas Paine, "The American Crisis I"
<http://www.ushistory.org/paine/crisis/c-01.htm>

*The Articles of Confederation (skim)
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp

Religious Freedom

Feb 12 *James Madison, Memorial & Remonstrance against Religious Assessments
<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-08-02-0163>

Creating the Constitution

Feb 14 *James Madison, Vices of the Political System of the United States
<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0187>

Feb 16-19 *Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States*, chapters I-VII & XI (book).

- Feb 21-28 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION SIMULATION (click here for readings)
 ([convention assignment](#) due)
- Mar 2 **No Class! Public Choice Meetings**
- Mar 5 *The Constitution
 http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html
- Mar 7 *Robert Bork, [Speech at University of San Diego Law School](#).
 *Leonard Levy, *Original Intent and the Framers' Constitution*, [chapter 1](#).
- Mar 9 *Leonard Levy, *Original Intent and the Framers' Constitution*, [chapter 14](#).
 [Extra credit assignment](#)
- Mar 12-16 **No Class! Spring Break**
- Mar 19-21 THE FEDERALIST DEBATES (click here for readings)
 ([federalist assignment](#) due)
- Mar 23 **No Class! Duke Conference**
- Mar 26-28 THE FEDERALIST DEBATES, continued
- Mar 30 *Thomas Jefferson, [To James Madison, Sept 6, 1789](#).
 The earth belongs to the living.

Slavery and Equality

- Apr 2-4 *Frederick Douglass, [My Bondage, My Freedom](#)
 1- Chapter VI. Treatment Of Slaves On Lloyd's Plantation.
 2- Chapter XXII. Liberty Attained.
 3- Chapter XXIII. Introduction To The Abolitionists.
 4- Chapter XXIV. Twenty-One Months In Great Britain.
- Apr 6 *Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*
 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/washington/toc.html>
 1- Chapter I. A Slave Among Slaves
 2- Chapter V. The Reconstruction period.
 3- Chapter VII. Early days at Tuskegee.
- Apr 9 *Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*
 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/washington/toc.html>
 4- Chapter XI. Making their beds before they could lie on them.

5- Chapter XVII. Last words.
([brief 2](#) due)

- Apr 11 *Elizabeth Stanton, “[Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions](#)” (1848)
 *Susan B. Anthony, “[On Women’s Right to Vote](#)” (1872)

Preserving the Union

- Apr 13-20 THE SECTIONAL DEBATES (click here for readings)
 (**[sectional assignment](#) due**)

- Apr 23-25 *Bruce Ackerman, We the People: Transformations (vol. 2). *Harvard U. Press*,
 [chapter 4](#) and [chapter 5](#) (legality of the 13th and 14th amendment).

Links

- *Elizabeth White’s [library page](#).
- *[Course Reserves](#) (search under dougherty).
- *[Avoiding Plagiarism](#).
- *UGA [Writing Center](#).
- *Teaching American History (Constitutional Convention and Federalist debates)
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/>
- *[Jane Doe](#) writing sample.
- *An example of a [high quality reading brief](#).
- *Lecture notes: [Early American Politics](#).