Seminar in American Political Thought  
Fall 2011  
POLS 475 & 670, ASTD 493 & 670

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McGannon 136

Ofc hrs:  T 12-12:45 pm,  
R 2:4-1:15 pm, and  
by appointment

Required Reading

Available in campus bookstore and libraries:

Jefferson, Selected Writings, ed. Mansfield (Harlan Davidson)*
Hamilton, Jay, Madison, The Federalist and Antifederalist Papers (Create Space)*
Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 2 vols., ed. Kramnick (Penguin)
Lincoln, Selected Speeches and Writings, ed. Gore Vidal (Penguin)*
DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk
Dewey, The Public and Its Problems

*These particular editions are required. Other editions will not have the same selections. Electronic versions of books are not suitable for this class because students will need hard copies of major texts readily available for reference in class and during the midterm exam. You will need to print out the shorter internet readings for use during class. Students will need to bring hard copies of all texts to class.

Shorter readings listed on the schedule below are available online, in Pius Library electronic databases, or on SLU Global.

Course Description

This course focuses on selected ideas, issues, and institutions that have been central to the U.S. Constitution and the practice of American constitutionalism, from the founding era to the present. Readings emphasize seminal works in American political thought, including works by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, W.E.B. DuBois, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and John Dewey. These are supplemented by historical accounts, literature, court cases, and contemporary analyses. Prerequisite: one political theory class or permission of instructor.

In Fall 2011, the course will focus on different notions of rights in American political thought from the founding era to the present. These range from the pre-social, natural rights of individuals that are assumed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, to the more social version of rights articulated in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the former are considered unalienable, attached to permanently sovereign individuals as protection against intrusions from society, the latter are largely acquired, shaped by an individual's needs and potential within a larger society. These different conceptions of rights shape public debates and policy outcomes, as the continuing debate over health care in the U.S. illustrates.

Goals

1. Students should be able to demonstrate in verbal and written analyses an understanding of
   • how rights have been understood by selected mainstream thinkers such as Jefferson, the Federalists, Lincoln and others;
   • how African American and women thinkers (among others) have criticized and expanded dominant approaches to rights;
   • how particular definitions of rights work to the advantage of some persons and groups and to the
disadvantage of others;
- how different understandings of rights are embedded in political and social institutions and in popular culture;
- how ideas about rights have been constructed in particular historical contexts and
- how the dominant constructions continue to exercise power

2. Students should also be able to use primary sources in American political thought to construct coherent, logically-supported written and oral argument.

3. Students should be able to produce research proposals and seminar papers that investigate the ramifications of different ideals for different American populations in different circumstances in a persuasive manner.

Requirements

All students are expected to attend all classes, complete reading assignments prior to the class for which they are assigned, participate fully in class discussions, occasionally respond in writing to study questions, and present 2-3 individual or group oral reports. It is essential to bring hard copies of readings to class. Because learning in this course depends heavily on participation in class discussion, and because the seminar meets only once a week, attendance is required at every class session. Absences are excused only if students 1) provide a good reason—e.g. illness, required university activity—preferably in advance and 2) turn in written responses to the study questions assigned for the missed class. In some cases, depending on the material missed, other work or a meeting with the instructor may be necessary.

Additional requirements for undergraduate students: a take-home midterm essay, one extra group workshop on the mechanics of literature review and presentation of theoretical arguments, and a design for a research project.

Students who attend all sessions, participate regularly, and show that they have reflected on the reading materials earn an “A” in class participation. Students who fall short on any of these aspects of participation can expect lower grades. For instance, students who attend all sessions and participate only when it is their turn to be a discussant earn a “satisfactory” rating (C) in class participation, as opposed to a “good” (B) or “excellent” (A). For every unexcused absence, the class participation component of the grade will be lowered one letter. (Ex. If a student who normally participates at a “B” level has one unexcused absence, the participation grade falls to a “C.”)

Midterm and final grades will be reported in terms of the College of Arts and Sciences grading scale for undergraduate and graduate students: A (4.0), A- (3.7), B+ (3.3), B (3.0), B- (2.7), C+ (2.3), C (2.0), C- (1.7), D (1.0), F (0.0). However, grades given on assignments and the manner of calculating grades are up to individual professors.

Undergraduate grades will be determined as follows: Class participation including reports 20%, Midterm Essay 20%, Final paper 60%. No student can earn credit for the course without a passing grade on the final research project. Since class meets only once a week and full class participation is essential to individual and group progress, no student who misses more than 1/3 of class sessions—regardless of the reason—can earn credit for the course. This will result in a grade of AF (failure due to absence). Students who have to miss class for a good reason, should notify the instructor by email in advance and should arrange with the instructor to do an extra written assignment to cover the material missed. These arrangements are the student’s responsibility.

Undergraduates are welcome at any optional graduate discussion and presentation sessions that may be scheduled.

Additional requirements for graduate students: a midterm synthetic essay, a literature review on a topic selected in consultation with the instructor, due on 10/29; at least one oral report on a book or article assigned by the instructor; a final paper. Graduate student grades are determined as follows: Final Research Project 60%; Class participation, including oral reports 20%; Literature Review and synthetic essay 20%. One or two optional extra sessions may be scheduled.
Writing assistance at Student Success Center

I encourage you to take advantage of the Student Success Center’s services; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. The Center offers one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 977-3484 or visit http://www.slu.edu/x34508.xml. There are specific writing services for graduate students, http://www.slu.edu/x18511.xml.

Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. (See http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml)

Academic Support Statement

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Tentative Schedule

Part I Introduction

8/30 Introduction: Is there a right to health care in the U.S.?
   “Health Care Must be a Fundamental Right,” editorial by William Woo, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 7, 1993 (SLU Global)

9/6 Locke, Second Treatise of Government, chps 2, 3, and 5,
   Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Dedication,
   http://www.constitution.org/jir/ineq.htm; The Social Contract, Bk I, ch 4-7,
Part II  Rights in the history of American political thought

9/13  Mansfield, ed., *Thomas Jefferson Selected Writings*  
G. H. Mead, “Natural Rights and the Theory of the Political Institution,”  
[http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs/Mead_1915a.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs/Mead_1915a.html)

9/20  *The Federalist,* #’s 1, 2, 10, 14, 23, 31, 49, 51, 54 57, 62, 63, 68, 70, 71; U.S. Constitution, Articles 1 & 2

9/27  *Federalist,* #’s 78, 84; U.S. Constitution, Article 3 and Amendments; *Antifederalist* selections, TBA;

10/4  Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* selections

10/11  Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* selections

10/18  Critical Approaches  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions* (1848),  
[http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html](http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html)  
Thoreau “Civil Disobedience” (1849),  
Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (1852),  
[http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a10.htm](http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a10.htm)  
Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government* (1851 posthumous)  
Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings,* ed. Gore Vidal

Undergraduate midterm essays due to [moskopww@slu.edu](mailto:moskopww@slu.edu) by 6 pm, Friday, 10/21.  Graduate literature reviews due to [moskopww@slu.edu](mailto:moskopww@slu.edu) by 6 pm, Sunday, 10/23.

10/25  Graduate class only, reading TBA; Fall break for undergraduates; however, any undergraduates who want to attend the graduate class session are welcome.

11/1  Lincoln, continued  
*Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) excerpt; *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) excerpt  [Pius Library electronic resources, LexisNexis Academic]

Part III  Re-imagining Rights

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (1963),  
[http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)

11/15  Elizabeth Cady Stanton, selections, [http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/](http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/)  
[http://womenshistory.about.com/od/stantonworks/a/womans_bible.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/stantonworks/a/womans_bible.htm)

*Bradwell v. The State of Illinois* (1872)  [Pius Library electronic resources, LexisNexis]

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1899),
http://etext.virginia.edu/subjects/Women-Writers.html; Women and Economics
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/gilman/economics/economics.html


11/29  Presentations

12/6  Presentations

12/13  Final papers are due electronically by 5 pm to moskopww@slu.edu.