

AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Political Science 308 / Spring 2024

McKenzie Hall 129

Instructor: dustin ellis / dellis@uoregon.edu

GE: Emily Beatty / ebeatty3@uoregon.edu

This course introduces students to an eclectic sampling of people and events integral to thinking about the political development of the United States, not only a place, but as an idea. The U.S. Declaration of Independence makes claims about human equality and declares governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.” We investigate how the practices of domination have been at odds with the principles of equality in the arc of the American experience which has been defined by the subordination or repression of people based on race, ethnicity, property class, gender, sexuality, religion, immigration status, age, and other qualities of human life. Our collective purpose will be to engage deeply with primary sources from multiple viewpoints that wrestle with these central concepts that have animated American political development historically and will continue to do so into the future.

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course and its assignments will develop an understanding of the key institutions, ideas, and interests at work in American politics, and will gain knowledge about a variety of key substantive policy and issue areas. This course also is designed to help build important critical skills and tools, including the following:

- To gain a demonstrated working knowledge of several major policy and political issues that lie at the heart of U.S. political debates today.
- To develop a deeper understanding of the workings and impact of the American political system at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- To grasp and apply important political concepts and theories of constitutional democracy.
- To help you reason well through varied problems and issues, whether in the classroom or in your personal and professional life. As Paul and Elder note, critical thinking “involves three interwoven phrases: It analyzes thinking, it evaluates thinking, and it improves thinking.” The work you do in and for this class is designed to enhance your critical thinking skills and tools, whether you are engaged in discussions or debates, presentations, or writing. That is, I hope to encourage all participants to ask substantive questions that reach past the allure of easy answers.
- Work with peers to improve writing skills and develop your writing process.
- Learn how to link course readings with your experiences of the social world.
- Learn how to engage your body and intuition in the process of thinking.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: To excel in this course (and any course), you need to attend class regularly, come prepared to discuss the readings, and hand assignments in on time. However, there is no required attendance. However, weekly discussion posts will be penalized for tardiness, no exceptions.

Material Expectations: Because the costs of higher education are already steep, you will be happy to learn that all the assigned readings, podcasts, and videos for this class are available on Canvas or online more generally. The materials assigned for each class session can be found on Canvas in each curated module.

Late Assignments: There will be explicit due dates on Canvas for all assignments. However, you can always turn in late assignments, but minor penalties will apply. There are no exceptions unless stated otherwise.

Academic Integrity: Avoid plagiarism and for the love of humanity do not use AI generators. You are ENCOURAGED to collaborate with each other and use the Discord / Canvas channels to continue discussions beyond the class which can then help you complete your assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR GRADED EVALUATION

Discussion Board Participation: Discussion of complex and controversial ideas is the throughline of this course. These should be more than a mind-dump but need not be essays. Every week will have a post, but you only need to complete 7 – you are encouraged to do them all and low scores will be dropped. In addition to 7 material related posts, there will be 3 course check-in posts that are very simple, for a total of 10. A general Rubric will guide the grading process on Canvas attached to each post. Moreover, you will be required to reply substantively to at least 5 peer discussion posts. There will be room for extra credit by replying beyond 5 times with real substance and engagement.

Weekly Reading Quiz: Students will complete weekly reading quizzes that test and enable the practice of skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, evaluation, logic, and argumentation. To meet all accommodations, there is no time limit on any exam, and you can make as many attempts as necessary to get the grade you want. Most questions will be multiple choice, true false, fill in the blank and of course its open notes.

Summary of the Expectations:

Assignments	QTY	%
Evaluative Discussion Post (unrelated to readings)	4	5
Material Discussion Posts & Replies	12	55
Reading & Comprehension Quiz	9	40
Extra Credit – Friday Postings / Additional Replies / Quality Control Replies	?	?
Total	25	100

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

April 1—7: Orienting Discussions and Introductions

1. Tuesday 4/2: Introduction post and class overview
2. Thursday 4/4: Class Discussion: What Is American Political Thought?

April 8—14: Old Ideas in a New World: Colonial Roots of American Democracy

1. Tuesday 4/9: Indigenous Origins of American Federalism
2. Thursday 4/11:
 - a. Jonathan Boucher, *On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance*
 - b. John Adams, *In defense of the Constitution*
 - c. Robert Yates, *Essays of Brutus*

April 15—21: The Origins of American Liberalism & Racial Capitalism in the US

1. Tuesday 4/16:
 - a. George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or Slavery without Masters*
 - b. John Calhoun, *On the Importance of Domestic Slavery*
 - c. Abraham Lincoln, *Cooper Union Address*
2. Thursday 4/18:
 - a. Douglass, *What to the slave is the Fourth of July?*
 - b. Angela Grimke, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*
 - c. David Walker *Appeal the Colored Citizens of the World*

April 22—28: Westward Conquest and National Building

1. Tuesday 4/23:
 - a. Theodore Roosevelt, *Winning the West*
 - b. Josiah Strong, *Our Country*
 - c. Chief Joseph, *An Indian's View of Indian Affairs*
 - d. Alex Sager, *What are Open Borders?*
2. Thursday 4/25:
 - a. Hiramn Evans, *The Klan's Fight for Americanism*
 - b. Henry Cabot Lodge, *Speech on Literacy Test for Immigrants*
 - c. Smedley Butler, *War is a Racket*
 - d. Eisenhower, *Farewell Address*

April 29—May 5: Early US Capitalism and its Critics

1. Tuesday 4/30:
 - a. FDR, *The Four Freedoms*
 - b. FDR, *The Second Bill of Rights*
 - c. Herbert Hoover, *The Fifth Freedom*

2. Thursday 5/2:
 - a. Lester Ward, *Plutocracy & Paternalism*
 - b. William Sumner, *The Challenge of Facts*
 - c. Chief Joseph, *On Work & Property*

May 6—12: Liberalism and its Critics

1. Tuesday 5/7:
 - a. Emma Goldman, *Anarchism: What it Really Stands For*
 - b. Lucy Parsons, *I am an Anarchist*.
 - c. Noam Chomsky, *Anarchism, Libertarian Socialism & Anarcho-Syndicalis* (YouTube)
2. Thursday 5/9:
 - a. Jonathan Haidt, *The moral roots of liberals and conservative* (YouTube)
 - b. Ayn Rand, *The Mike Wallace Interview with Ayn Rand*
 - c. Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*

May 13—19: Black Political Thought & Liberation Politics

1. Tuesday 5/14:
 - a. Marcus Garvey, *The True Solution of the Negro Problem*
 - b. Malcom X debates Bayard Rustin (YouTube)
 - c. Stokely Carmichael, *Toward Black Liberation*
2. Thursday 5/16:
 - a. Malcolm X, *The Ballot, or the Bullet* (YouTube)
 - b. MLK, *The Power of Non-Violence*
 - c. Kimberlee Crenshaw, *The Urgency of Intersectionality* (Video)

May 20—26: Varieties of Feminism

1. Tuesday 5/21:
 - a. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
 - b. Susan B. Anthony, *Speech about her Indictment*
 - c. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Address to the New York State Legislature*
 - d. Victoria Woodhull, *The Principles of Social Freedom*
2. Thursday 5/23:
 - a. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*
 - b. The Combahee River Collective
 - c. Redstockings Manifesto
 - d. Audre Lorde, *Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Redefining Difference*
 - e. Vice, *Conservatives and Progressives Debate Feminism* (YouTube)

May 27—June 2: Liberal Subjectivities and Being in the World

1. Tuesday 5/28:
 - a. Judith Butler, *Gender Theory* (YouTube)
 - b. Cornel West, *Examined Life excerpt* (YouTube)

- c. Judith Butler and Sunaura Taylor, *Examined Life excerpt* (YouTube)
 - d. Vice, *Debating Masculinity* (YouTube)
2. Thursday 5/30:
 - a. TBD – Emily Selections

June 3—June 9: Neoliberalism, Modern Conservatism, and the Future of US politics?

1. Tuesday 6/4:
 - a. Tom Klingenstein, *Trump's Virtues* (part 1 and 2 – YouTube)
 - b. Obama
 - c. Trump
 - d. Biden
2. Thursday 6/6:
 - a. Omni & Winant, *Colorblindness, Neoliberalism, and Obama* (excerpt)
 - b. Various Clips of Presidents and views on immigration & Borders (Canvas)
 - c. General Term Review

June 10—16 – Finals Week

1. No class – good luck with finals!!

OTHER INFORMATION

Office Hours and Communications

Office hours will be by appointment only. Usually, most questions can be addressed immediately after class, but if you want to schedule formal office hours then please contact me and it can be arranged.

You also can reach me via email at dellis@uoregon.edu (I check this regularly).

Class Etiquette: Try to sit such that 1 desk/seat is empty between each person. Generally practice safe and clean hygiene (like wash your hands, don't cough/sneeze on someone). You can get up to use the restroom without permission, just be respectful and mindful of the shared space.

Guidelines for Class Discussions: Below are some useful guidelines for discussions to keep in mind this term for both general discussions and in-class debates:

Discussing to Learn: Contribute ideas and views in the spirit of inquiring and learning together, rather than trying to debate or win arguments (unless the activity is designed as a debate or to assess best arguments).

Mindful Listening: Listen actively with attention and respect for what others are saying, without interrupting or tuning out to focus on preparing one's own contribution.

Stepping Up/Stepping Back: Pay attention to the voices in the room and be mindful of one's contributions. Are there patterns regarding which voices are being heard and which are not? How do I fit in these patterns? Is there need to step back and let others have the opportunity to contribute? Is there needed to step up and contribute more? Do we feel empowered to hold ourselves accountable for our class participation dynamics?

Listening Lenience: Remember that we are learning together and may not necessarily get something right the first or even second try. Practice being lenient with oneself and with others. Restating what someone just said can provide them with an opportunity to clarify or revise their statement. Similarly, it is good practice to state when you say something not quite right and then try to state it again or ask for help in saying it.

Ideas not Individuals: Focus on engaging others' ideas not judging or criticizing individuals. Asking for clarification can be helpful and using language such as "The idea I hear you saying is..." (rather than "you said") or "I don't agree with that idea..." (rather than "I don't agree with you).

Support Our Statements: Offer supporting evidence of some kind to back up your contributions, such as data, clear reasoning, or reference to a text, and be aware that your own experience or an anecdotal story may not fit a larger pattern. Remember that being an exception does not discredit a rule.

A Part is Not the Whole: Remember that your view or experience is your view or experience, a partial opening onto the whole, and not necessarily a general view or experience of everyone; nor are the views or experiences of others necessarily going to match your own. And, just as you cannot represent an entire group of people, nor can anyone else represent a group of people. It is quite okay for everyone to speak their truth and their experience, but working from individual views and experiences to more general ideas or conclusions often requires considerable work.

Mutual Respect: A key goal is to respect diverse experiences, viewpoints, approaches, and identities. Even when we disagree, please do not undermine, demean, or marginalize others.

Academic Integrity: The University Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct, which includes unauthorized help on assignments and examinations and the use of sources without acknowledgment. Dishonest behavior includes both "giving" and "taking" of improper assistance on exams, papers, or any other form of attempting to take credit for work that is not your own. If you are uncertain what plagiarism entails, please see the following site: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>.

Accessible Education

If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please let me know. In addition, please request a letter from the Accessible Education Center (346-1155, 164 Oregon Hall) that verifies your disability and states the accommodation that I can make. I will make any reasonable adjustments necessary to improve your learning environment.

Notice of duty to report

We support Title IX and have a duty to report relevant information. The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Any UO employee who becomes aware that such behavior is occurring has a duty to report that information to their supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. The University Health Center and University Counseling and Testing Center can provide assistance and have a greater ability to work confidentially with students.

University Health and Counseling Services

University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at health.uoregon.edu/ducknest.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at atcounseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).