

American Political Thought

GOVT 4887

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Andrew P. Gibson (apg53@georgetown.edu)

MEETING TIME: Mondays, 5:00-7:30 pm

LOCATION: ICC 208 B

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 2:45-4:00 pm

[Please reserve on [Calendly](#) or email to set an alternative appointment time.]

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a survey of American political thought from Puritan politics in the seventeenth century up to twentieth century debates over American principles. Our goal is not only to study dominant concepts and controversies within the canonical works of this period—issues of representation, democracy, republicanism, slavery, violence, labor, gender, or race—but to place these abstract ideas in historical context and consider their contemporary relevance. We will focus not simply on American political thought's founding figures but its dissidents, disenfranchised, and dispossessed. What distinguishes the unique character of American political thought? What can we learn about the present state of American politics by exploring our political and theoretical past?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is required for all class meetings. Over the course of the semester, you have one free unexcused absence to use as you please. Absences beyond this will begin to affect your participation grade. Excused absences should be approved in advance and be accompanied by a letter from your dean.

Readings: Students should come to class with readings completed and with thoughtful questions on the material. I also suggested annotating the readings, either by using the Canvas software or writing on physical printouts of the books or articles. All readings will be posted on Canvas; however, you may want to purchase the following reasonably priced books:

- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (any modern edition).
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. and trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- Abraham Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings* (Library of America, 2009)
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Yale University Press, 2015)

Papers: One textual analysis paper (1,000-1,2500 words), one short paper (5 pages), and a final paper on a topic of your choosing (8-10 pages).

Presentation: Students will give a short (5-8 minute) presentation on one of the readings for the given week. The presentation will summarize the reading and state its importance for thinking about the broader course themes and American political thought itself. It can either be given in the form of a mini-lecture or the reading of a prepared statement (1,000-1,200 words). During the first weeks of the semester, each student will select their presentation week; if there are two students presenting for the week, they will decide amongst themselves who will take what reading.

Electronics Policy: The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom—except for the consultation of the course readings. This includes laptop computers and cell phones. Participation points will be docked for the day if it is obvious that you are surfing the web or messaging in class.

COURSE MEETINGS

Week 1 (Sept. 3): American Political Theory

- 1) Judith N. Shklar “Redeeming American Political Theory,” *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 3–15.

Week 2 (Sept. 9): Puritan Political Thought

- 1) William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (~1630) in *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, ed. Perry Miller (Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 1-20.
- 2) John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) in *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology*, ed. Heimert and Delbanco (Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 81-92.
- 3) John Winthrop, “Speech to the General Court” (1645) in *The American Puritans*, pp. 89-93.
- 4) Mary Rowlandson, *The True History of the Captivity and Deliverance of Mary Rowlandson* (1682) in *The Norton Book of American Autobiography*, ed. Jay Parini (W. W. Norton & Co., 1999), pp. 23-38.
- 5) Cotton Mather, *Bonifacius* (1710) in *The American Puritans*, pp. 215-21.

Week 3 (Sept. 16): Independence and Dependence at the Revolution

- 1) Samuel Adams, “The Rights of the Colonists” (1772) in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed., Harry Alonzo Cushing, 4 vols. (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904–08), 2:350–59.
- 2) Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776) in *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings* (Oxford Classics, 1995), pp. 3-59.
- 3) “Declaration of Independence” (1776)—Jefferson’s Draft and Congressional Adoption—in Thomas Jefferson, *The Political Writings*, ed. Joyce Appleby and Terrence Ball (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 96-105.
- 4) Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776, in *American Political Thought*, pp. 431-32.

Week 4 (Sept. 23): The Federalist and Antifederalist Debate over the Constitution

- 1) “The Constitution of the United States” and “Bill of Rights” in *The Federalist with Letters of “Brutus”*, ed. Terrence Ball (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 545-58.
- 2) Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist* (1787-88), nos. 1, 2, 9, 10, 14, 51, 68, 70, 78, 85. [pp. 1-8, 35-46, 59-64, 234-44, 251-55, 331-34, 341-48, 377-83, 426-32.]
- 3) Richard Henry Lee (?), “Letters from the Federal Farmer” (1787) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 214-22.
- 4) Robert Yates (?), “Essays of Brutus” (1787-88) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 222-32.
- 5) Patrick Henry, “Speech in the Virginia Ratifying Convention” (1788) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 232-40.

Week 5 (Sept. 30): Education, Political Economy, and Foreign Policy in the Early Republic

- 1) Benjamin Franklin “Two Letters” and “Part Two” in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, [1791] 2003), pp. 133-160.
- 2) Alexander Hamilton, *Report on Manufacturers* (1791) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 267-277.
- 3) George Washington, *Farewell Address* (1796) in *George Washington’s Farewell Address to the People of the United States*, ed. W. D. Lewis (American Book Company, 1906), pp. 11-31.
- 4) John Quincy Adams, *An Address Delivered at the Request of a Committee of the Citizens of Washington for Celebrating the Anniversary of Independence on the Fourth of July 1821* (Hilliard and Metcalf, 1821), pp. 3-34.

Week 6 (Oct. 7): Alexis de Tocqueville on Postrevolutionary Democracy

- 1) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2000), vol. 1 (1830), Author’s Introduction; Part 1, chaps. 3-4; Part 2, chap. 7. [pp. 3-15, 46-55, 235-49]
- 2) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2 (1840), Author’s Introduction; Part 2, chaps. 1-5, 10-13; Part 3, chap. 17; Part 4, chaps. 6-8. [pp. 399-400, 479-92, 506-14, 587-88, 661-76]

Textual Analysis Paper Due Friday, October 11 by Midnight on Canvas

Fall Break: No Class on Monday, October 14

Week 7 (Oct. 21): Responding to Settler Empire

- 1) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (1835), Part 2, chap. 10 (“Present State and Probable Future of the Indian Tribes” and “Position that the Black Race Occupies in the United States”). [pp. 302-48]
- 2) Elias Boudinot, “Address to the Whites” (1826) in *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972*, ed. David Martínez (Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 41-49.
- 3) William Apes, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man” (1833) and “Eulogy on King Philip” (1837) in *On Our Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apes, A Pequot*, ed. Barry O’Connell (The University of Massachusetts Press), pp. 155-61, 275-310.
- 4) Black Hawk, *Autobiography* (1833) in *The Norton Book of American Autobiography*, pp. 80-93.

Week 8 (Oct. 28): Slavery and Freedom

- 1) John C. Calhoun, “Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions” (1837) in *Union and Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Ross M. Lence (Liberty Fund, 1992), pp. 468-76.
- 2) George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South* (1854) and *Cannibals All!* (1857) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 624-43.
- 3) Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech” (1861) in *Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the Civil War* (National Publishing Company, 1866), pp. 717-729.

- 4) Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852) in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed., John W. Blassingame, 8 vols. (Yale University Press, 1982), 2:359-88.

Week 9 (Nov. 4): Lincoln on Union and Reunion

- 1) Abraham Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings* (Library of America, 2009), pp. 13-21, 91-99, 117-22, 233-37, 284-95, 368-69, 405, 449-51.
- "Address to the Young Man's Lyceum" (1838)
 - "Fragment on Government" and "Fragment on Slavery" (1854?)
 - "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, IL" (1854)
 - "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision at Springfield, IL" (1857)
 - "Address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Milwaukee, WI" (1860)
 - "First Inaugural Address" (1861)
 - "Final Emancipation Proclamation" (1862)
 - "Address at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania" (1863)
 - "Second Inaugural Address" (1865).

Week 10 (Nov. 11): Individualism and Manifest Destiny

- 1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1840) in *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols. Fireside Edition (Boston and New York, 1909). 2:47-87.
- 2) William Graham Sumner, "The Challenge of Facts" (1895) in *The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays*, ed. Albert Galloway Keller (Yale University Press, 1914), pp. 17-52.
- 3) Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) and "Contributions of the West to American Democracy" (1903) in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner* (Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 31-60, 77-100.

Short Paper Due Friday, November 15 by Midnight on Canvas

Week 11 (Nov. 18): American Feminisms

- 1) Susan B. Anthony, "Social Purity" (1875) in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman (Modern Library, 2007), 85-91.
- 2) Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self" (1892) in *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, ed. Ann D. Gordon, 6 vols (Rutgers University Press, 1997-2013) 5:423-34.
- 3) Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892) in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, pp. 116-121.
- 4) Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What it Really Stands For" (1910) and "The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation" (1913), "Woman Suffrage" (1911), and "Marriage and Love" (1910) in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Schulman (Humanity Books, 1996), pp. 61-77, 158-74, 190-203, 204-213.

Week 12 (Nov. 25): Reconstructing Race

- 1) Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895) in *Up From Slavery* (Doubleday, 1907), pp. 217-237.
- 2) W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Yale University Press [1903] 2015), Forethought, chaps. 1-3, 6, 14. [pp. 1-46, 68-83, 188-99]
- 3) Marcus Garvey, "The True Solution to the Negro Problem" (1903) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 876-882.

Week 13 (Dec. 2): The Radical Sixties

- 1) Young Americans for Freedom, "The Sharon Statement" (1960) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1120-21.
- 2) Students for a Democratic Society, "The Port Huron Statement" (1962) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1121-31.
- 3) Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1147-53.
- 4) Betty Friedan, selections of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1158-64.
- 5) Jerry Rubin, "A Yippie Manifesto" (1969) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1168-1176.
- 6) Joan Didion, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" (1967) in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), pp. 84-128.

Week 14 (Dec. 9): Redeemer Nation or Crusader State?

- 1) Sheldon Wolin, "The People's Two Bodies" (1980) in *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*, ed. Nicholas Xenos (Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 379-93.
- 2) Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Address" (1961) in *American Political Thought*, pp. 1109-14.
- 3) Richard Nixon, "The great silent majority of my fellow Americans" (1969) in *Richard Nixon: Speeches, Writings, Documents*, ed. Rick Perlstein (Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 170-90.
- 4) Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address" (1989) from the Reagan Presidential Library, pp. 1-6.
- 5) Michael Rogin, "American Political Demonology: A Retrospective" in *Ronald Reagan, The Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (University of California Press, 1988), pp. 272-300.

Final Paper Due Thursday, December 19 by Midnight on Canvas

WRITING RESOURCES

["Anatomy of an Essay in Political Thought"](#)

[Georgetown University Writing Center](#)

GRADING

Grade Breakdown

Participation (25%)
Presentation (10%)
Textual Analysis Paper (15%)
Short Paper (20%)
Final Paper (30%)

Grading Scale

A	96-100
A-	91-95
B+	86-90
B	81-85
B-	76-80
C+	71-75
C	65-70
C-	60-64
D+	59-55
D	54-50
F	< 50

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the [Georgetown University Honor System](#).

Accommodations

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. A student is asked to work with the [Academic Resource Center](#) and alert the instructor of accommodations at the beginning of the semester.

Accessibility and Inclusion

A central tenet of Georgetown's educational mission is *cura personalis*, a Latin phrase meaning "care of the whole person." Georgetown is committed to showing concern for each student by creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment that follows universal design principles to meet the needs of its diverse student body. We are also, in this class, committed to creating a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

Copyright Protections

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Title IX Syllabus Statement (endorsed by Faculty Senate)

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

- Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician.
- More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process. More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).

Honor Code Pledge

In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life I commit myself to respect and to uphold the Georgetown University honor system; to live out a commitment to integrity in all my words and actions; to be honest in every academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together; to live out the ideals of Georgetown University I commit myself to be a person for others in my daily life, respectful of difference and disagreement; To care for this venerable campus and all of those with whom I share it; and to fulfill in all ways the trust placed in me to carry on the Georgetown tradition.