

American Political Thought
POL SC 453
Fall 2009
Brackett Hall, Room 212

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This course studies competing intellectual traditions in American political thought from the 1830s to the present. More particularly, this course explores the relationship between political theory and political action. To that end, we examine several of the best and most influential plans for governing the United States. The course is divided into three units: the first examines the antebellum arguments of pro- and antislavery writers; the second examines the arguments of twentieth century liberals and conservatives; and in the third, we read Ayn Rand's classic novel *Atlas Shrugged*.

TEXTS TO BE PURCHASED

Faust, (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery*, Louisiana State University Press 0-8071-0892-8
Thompson (ed.), *Anti-Slavery Political Writings, 1833-1860* M.E. Sharpe ISBN: 0-7656-1403-5
Howard Zinn (ed.), *New Deal Political Thought* Hackett Publishing ISBN: 0872206858
Gregory Schneider (ed.), *Conservatism in America Since 1930*, New York U. Press ISBN: 0814797997
Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* Plume 0-452-01187-6

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Students will be penalized for frequent, unexcused absences. You will not succeed in this course if you do not attend classes regularly.

STUDENTS MUST DO THE ASSIGNED READINGS AHEAD OF TIME. In light of the fact that we are reading some of the most challenging texts in the history of American political thought, you are advised to read the assignments with care and seriousness. My very strong advice is to read each assignment twice before class. I will *not* be teaching you what the book says. Instead, my job is to guide you to the mountain top, but *you* must do the walking and heavy lifting. For everything we read in this course and for everything said by your instructor and your classmates, you must always ask one question: IS IT TRUE? That's the ultimate criterion.

PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSION IS ASSUMED. I encourage students to ask questions. **Remember:** there are no bad questions; there are only bad answers from the instructor. Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. You should assume that if you find something difficult or confusing, there is a good chance that other students in the class have the same kinds of concerns. Sometimes the simplest questions are revealing of the most important arguments.

PAPERS AND EXAMS: The graded requirements for the course are as follows: Students will sit for two tests on the first two units of the course (each worth 25% of their final grade); they will take 10, five-point pop quizzes on the third unit, and sit for a final exam. Quality class participation will count as a bonus that could potentially improve your grade by 5%.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE

TH: Introduction

WEEK TWO

T: Faust, *Ideology of Slavery*
William Harper, "Memoir on Slavery," pp. 78-110

TH: Faust, *Ideology of Slavery*,
James H. Hammond, "Letter to an English Abolitionist," pp. 168-205

WEEK THREE

T: Thompson, *Antislavery Political Writings*
"Preface" and "Introduction," pp. ix-x, xiii-xxviii
Frederick Douglass, "Slavery," pp. 24-30

TH: Thompson, *Antislavery Political Writings*
William E. Channing, "Selections from *Slavery*," pp. 31-38

WEEK FOUR

T: Thompson, *Antislavery Political Writings*
American Anti-Slavery Society, "Declaration of Sentiments," pp. 41-45
Amos Phelps, "Selections from *Slavery and Its Remedy*," pp. 46-60.

TH: Thompson, *Antislavery Political Writings*
William Bowditch, "Slavery and the Constitution," pp. 133-143
Frederick Douglass, "The Constitution of the US: Is It Pro-Slavery or AntiSlavery," pp. 144-156

WEEK FIVE

T: Thompson, *Antislavery Political Writings*
Henry C. Wright, "No Rights, No Duties: or Slaveholders, as Such, Have No Rights; Slaves, as Such, Owe No Duties," pp. 246-260

TH: **FIRST TEST—25% of your final grade**

WEEK SIX

T: Zinn, *New Deal Political Thought*
Charles Beard, "The Myth of Rugged American Individualism," pp. 1-10
Stuart Chase, "The Age of Distribution," pp. 21-27
John Dewey, "The Future of Liberalism," pp. 28-35
Thurman Arnold, "Selection from *The Symbols of Government*," pp. 35-43

TH: Zinn, *New Deal Political Thought*
Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address," pp. 45-52
"Oglethorpe University Address," pp. 77-84
Rexford Tugwell, "Planning Must Replace Laissez-Faire," pp. 84-91

WEEK SEVEN

T: Schneider, *Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader*
Richard M. Weaver, "The Quest for Order," pp. 95-106
Russell Kirk, "The Conservative Mind," pp. 107-121

TH: Schneider, *Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader*
Frank S. Meyer, “A Rebel Finds His Tradition,” pp. 171-179
F. A. Hayek, “Why I Am Not a Conservative,” pp.180-192
William F. Buckley, Jr., “National Review: Statement of Intentions,” pp. 195-200
William F. Buckley, Jr., “National Review: Credenda and Statement of Principles,” pp. 201-205

WEEK EIGHT

T: Schneider, *Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader*
Murray N. Rothbard, “Why Be a Libertarian,” pp. 253-257
Frank S. Meyer, “Libertarianism or Libertinism,” pp. 259-261
Murray N. Rothbard, “What is Libertarianism,” pp. 262-272

TH: **SECOND TEST—25% of your final grade**

WEEK NINE

T: NO CLASS—Fall Break

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 3-88

WEEK TEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 89-161

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 162-252

WEEK ELEVEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 253-291

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 292-422

WEEK TWELVE

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 423-495

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 496-607

WEEK THIRTEEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 608-697

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 701-815

WEEK FOURTEEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 816-863

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 864-999

WEEK FIFTEEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 1000-1025

TH: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving

WEEK SIXTEEN

T: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 1025-1047

TH: Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 1047-1069

WEEK SEVENTEEN

EXAM WEEK

Note: I reserve the right to revise the readings as we go along. IT IS THEREFORE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE YOU THAT YOU GET THE ASSIGNED READING IF YOU HAVE MISSED A CLASS.