Politics 238  
Modern American Political Thought  
Spring 2012  

Prof. Harry Hirsch  
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This course surveys major ideas about politics in the United States from 1960 to the present.

POLT 233 or another course in political theory is helpful background but is not a formal prerequisite. Students should also have a basic familiarity with American history during the period; if you do not, please consult the instructor about additional reading.

Each student will:

1. Take responsibility for leading one class session. This will constitute .20 of your grade.

2. Write a review of two secondary sources, due as indicated below.

3. Complete a take-home final exam.

4. Write 4 short papers (2-3 pp) due as indicated below.

5. Keep up with the reading, attend class, and participate in discussions. Attendance and class participation will constitute a third of your grade.

Students may write a review of a third secondary source (either Kloppenberg, Reading Obama or Robin, The Reactionary Mind) for extra credit; the grade on this paper will replace your lowest short paper grade.

Feedback about the course is welcome throughout.

There is a concurrent, optional film series Thursday evenings at 7 pm (see separate schedule); only one of two films is required viewing (see below).
Students are reminded to consult the College honor code, and any student with a documented disability should consult the instructor to arrange appropriate accommodation.

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on E-reserve. MM refers to *The Radical Reader*, edited by McCarthy and McMillan. DC refers to *American Political Thought*, edited by Dolbeare and Cummings. Both books are available at the bookstore.

Schedule:

T 2/7. Introduction

Th 2/9. Background: 330 years in 75 minutes

  - Federalist #10, DC p. 91
  - Eugene Debs, DC #39
  - FDR, DC #45
  - Ginsberg, “Howl,” MM p. 463

T 2/14. Liberalism

  - Walzer, “Liberalism and the Art of Separation”*
  - Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”*

Th 2/16. Civil Rights to Black Power

  - MM #90-99

T 2/21. Short paper due

Th 2/23. Feminism

  - MM #100-106

T 2/28. Feminism

  - MM #107-111

Th 3/1. Short paper due

T 3/6. The New Left

  - MM #113-121

Th 3/8. Book review due: Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*
T 3/13. Environmentalism

MM #127-133

Th 3/15. From Gay to Queer

MM #134-143

T 3/20. Neoliberalism

Harvey, “A Brief History of Neoliberalism”*
Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Democracy”*

Th 3/22. Neoconservatism

DC #55, 57, 58, 59, 63

Spring break

T 4/3. 9/11

Rosenblum, “Constitutional Reason of State”*

Th 4/5. Short paper due

T 4/10. Communitarianism

Etzioni, “The Responsive Community Platform”*
Etzioni, “Old Chestnuts and New Spurs”*
Sandel, “Moral Argument and Liberal Toleration”*

Th 4/12. Recent developments

DC #64-70

T 4/17. Recent developments

MM #144-151

Th 4/19. Recent developments

MM #152-155

T 4/24. Obama

DC # 71
Sullivan, “Obama’s Long Game”*

Th 4/26. Book review due: Ackerman, *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic*

T 5/1. Managed Democracy

Wolin, *Democracy Inc.*, Preface through Ch 8

Th 5/3. Inverted Totalitarianism?

Wolin, remainder

T 5/8. Where Are We?

Hedges, “The Illusion of America”*

Th 5/10. Short paper due on one of two films (or both): “Taxi to the Dark Side” and/or “Fair Game”
Films are shown in King 341 on Thursday evenings at 7 pm. All films are optional except the final two; students will write a short paper on one or both of these films (see syllabus).

Th 2/9. "Doctor Strangelove"

Th 2/16. "Eyes on the Prize"

Th 3/1. "Easy Rider"


Th 3/15. "The Times of Harvey Milk"

Th 3/22. "Wall Street"

Th 4/26. "Fair Game"

Th 5/3. "Taxi to the Dark Side"