Politics 238  
Modern American Political Thought  

Spring 2013  

Prof. Harry Hirsch  
Rice 209  
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Office hours: Sign up at http://bit.ly/bPHwXY

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 reviews 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 Blackboard. 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 2/5.** Introduction

**Th 2/7.** Background: 330 years in 75 minutes

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

**T 2/12.** Liberalism

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

**Th 2/14.** Civil Rights to Black Power

- MM #90-99

**T 2/19.** Short paper due

**Th 2/21.** Feminism

- MM #100-106

**T 2/26.** Feminism

- MM #107-111

**Th 2/28.** Short paper due

**T 3/5.** The New Left

- MM #113-121

**Th 3/7.** Book review due: Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*
T 3/12. Environmentalism

MM #127-133

Th 3/14. From Gay to Queer

MM #134-143

T 3/19. Neoliberalism

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

Th 3/21. Neoconservatism

DC #55, 57, 58, 59, 63

Spring break

T 4/2. 9/11

Rosenblum, “Constitutional Reason of State”*

Th 4/4. Short paper due

T 4/9. Communitarianism

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

Th 4/11. Recent developments

DC #64-70

T 4/16. Recent developments

MM #144-151

Th 4/18. Recent developments

MM #152-155

T 4/23. Obama

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

Th 4/25. Book review due: Ackerman, *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic*

T 4/30. Managed Democracy

Wolin, *Democracy Inc*, Preface through Ch 8

Th 5/2. Inverted Totalitarianism?

Wolin, remainder

T 5/7. Where Are We?

Hedges, “The Illusion of America”*

Th 5/9. Short paper due on one of two films (or both): “Taxi to the Dark Side” and/or “Fair Game”