Politics 238
Modern American Political Thought
Spring 2014

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

Other courses in political theory and contemporary American politics are helpful background but are 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 3 short papers (3-4 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.

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 2/4. Introduction

Th 2/6. Background: 330 years in 75 minutes

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

T 2/11. Liberalism

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

Th 2/13. Conservatism

- Story & Laurie, *The Rise of Conservatism in America*, #1-13

T 2/18. Civil Rights to Black Power

- MM #90-99

Th 2/20. Short paper due

T 2/25. Feminism

- MM #100-111

Th 2/27. The New Left

- MM #113-121

T 3/4. Book review due: Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*

Th 3/6. Environmentalism

- MM #127-133

T 3/11. From Gay to Queer
Th 3/13. Neoliberalism

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

T 3/18. Neoconservatism

Story & Laurie, #18
DC #55, 57, 58, 59, 63

Th 3/20. 9/11

Rosenblum, “Constitutional Reason of State”*
Short paper due

Spring break

T 4/1. Communitarianism

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

Th 4/3. Moving Right

Story & Laurie, #34-42

T 4/8. Recent developments

DC #64-70

Th 4/10. Recent developments

MM #144-155

T 4/15. Obama

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

Th 4/17. Book review due: Ackerman, The Decline and Fall of the American Republic

T 4/22. Managed Democracy
Wolin, *Democracy Inc*, Preface through Ch 8

Th 4/24. Inverted Totalitarianism?

Wolin, remainder

T 4/29. [Catch up day if needed]

Th 5/1. Democracy Reborn?

Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*

T 5/6. Where are We?

Hedges, “The Illusion of America”*

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

Th 5/8. Last class