

Spring 2-2-1999

## PSC 352.01: American Political Thought

Ramona Grey

*University of Montana - Missoula*, [ramona.grey@umontana.edu](mailto:ramona.grey@umontana.edu)

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University of Montana  
Department of Political Science  
American Political Thought

PSC 352  
Spring 1999  
MWF 1-1:50

Dr. Grey  
Office Hrs MW 2-3, T 3-4  
Office: LA 243;  
Phone: 243-2105

Course Description

This course will explore American political thought from the period of the Puritans in Massachusetts to the late nineteenth-century, age of robber barons. Our focus will be on the ideas, movements, parties, and individual thinkers that have contributed to the development of an "American tradition" of political thought and practice. As we shall quickly discover, political thought in this country is not merely an offshoot of the well-worn European themes, but develops out the search for identity, common experiences, and historical political struggles.

The assigned books are as follows:

1. Mason and Baker (eds.), Free Government In The Making
2. Hamilton, Madison, Jay, The Federalist Papers
3. Bellamy, Looking Backward
4. Paine, Common Sense
5. Fac Packet: "The Puritans," Paine's Common Sense; Thoreau's Civil Disobedience, R. Bourne, War & the Intellectuals

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the major pre-Civil War thinkers and assess their contributions to the philosophical ideas and values that underscore America political discourse.
2. Develop an critical essay examining a particular American thinker's assumptions about liberty, equality, individual and community rights, the good life, constitutionalism, etc. The goal of the essay assignments (including the midterm and the final) is to encourage students not only to learn about American political thought, but to learn how to think theoretically about politics.
3. Provide an interpretive final essay on Edward Bellamy's utopian novel, *Looking Backward*. What, if any, are the distinctively "American" ethical values and political themes found in Bellamy's conception of the good life. (please see Bellamy Paper Guidelines)



- 2/17- *War of Independence*  
2/19 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 88-121;  
Recommend: Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution
- 2/22- *Thomas Paine and Natural Rights/ Problem of Union*  
2/24 Read: Paine, Common Sense (packet)
- 2/26 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 144-148, 152-157.  
*Discuss Essays*(due 2/24): What seems to disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"
- 3/1- *US Constitutional Thought: Hamilton, Madison, and the Problem of Union*  
3/3 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government...,178-180;  
Hamilton, The Federalist, Nos. 15, 23, 31, 33, 70.
- 3/5- *Madison & the Constitutional Republic*  
3/8 Read: Madison, The Federalist, Nos. 10 & 51
- 3/8- *The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists*  
3/10 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 227-250, 285-290.
- 3/12 *Discuss Essays* (due 3/10): What theoretical difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?
- \* Midterm Due March 13th
- Spring Break 3/15-3/21*
- 3/22 *John Adams and Mixed Government*  
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 160-169,142-144, 160-169.  
Recommend: Joseph Dorfman, "The Regal Republic of John Adams," in John Roche's Origins of American Political Thought
- 3/24 *Political Thought of the Formative Years: Hamilton, Marshall and National Supremacy*  
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 299-323
- 3/26 *Go'in West: dreams & reality*
- 3/29- *Jeffersonian Democracy*  
3/31 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 329-351

- 4/2            **Discuss Essays (due 3/31):** Jefferson and the authors of The Federalist Papers had two different visions for the American Republic. On the one hand, Jefferson imagines a country of "yeoman" farmers whereas the Federalists envision a society consisting of a plethora of competing business interests. Critically evaluate the competing visions. Which one, in your view, is more compatible with "republican" government? Why?
- 4/5-            **The Jacksonian Movement**  
4/7            Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 361-395, 425-431.
- 4/9            **The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments**
- 4/12           **John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities**  
Reading: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 453-462
- 4/14           **Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism**  
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 409-415.
- 4/16           **Discuss Essays (due 4/14):** Is Emerson's philosophy essentially radical or conservative? Explain
- 4/19-           **Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience**  
4/21           Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 438-453;  
                 H.D. Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 109-137 (in packet.)
- 4/24           **Discuss Essays (due 4/21):** "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic thought."
- 4/26           **Webster, Lincoln, and the Cause of Union**  
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 462-472, 479-482, 484-501, \*Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 4/27-           **Sumner and Laissez-Faire**  
4/29           Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529  
                 \*Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 5/3-            **Bellamy and Socialism**  
5/4            Recommend: Michael Harrington, Socialism, Chap. VI, "The American Exception"  
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536  
                 \*Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)
- 5/7            **Conclusion: American Parables**

\*\*\*Final Due May 12th by 1 pm \*\*\*\*  
{see attached}

**Final**  
**(40% of total grade)**  
**Bellamy's *Looking Backward***

**I. Content**

**A. Description (15% of paper grade)**

Provide no more than a cursory attempt at describing the content of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the novel. (One short paragraph should be sufficient.)

**B. Analysis (50 % of paper grade)**

Among the *political thinkers & theories* we have studied this semester, *who* is Bellamy addressing? In other word, what political values/ideas of his predecessors does Bellamy embrace and what ideas does he reject. Why?

In particular, what are the underlying assumptions about human nature? What is the system of the government in Bellamy's utopia? What is the *value* system of Dr. Leete's "new" American society? (Look at, for instance, what the citizens in twenty-first century are taught, if anything, regarding the politics, the role of law, and socio-economic conditions of the nineteenth-century.) What is Bellamy telling us about the relations of employer and employee, men and women, parents and children in capitalist society verses a socialist one?

**C. Conclusion (35% of paper value)**

Does Bellamy convince the reader that this ideal *America* is desirable, or possible, or inevitable? Why, or why not? Do you see things in the present American society which duplicate some features of his utopia?

**D. Planning**

Part B should comprise the largest part of your paper. In other words, roughly 6 pages (min.) should be on analysis and 3 pages on part C as your conclusion.

**II Style:** Be sure you edit your paper carefully. Points will be deducted for spelling and grammatical errors.

**A. Additional Reading**

You should review lecture notes and *assigned reading* to substantiate your positions for parts IB and IC.

**B. Quotations**

**All quotations or paraphrasing in your work from any material must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited as to their origin.**

**C. Bibliography**

**You should include a complete bibliography of all books used for this paper.**

**Due May 12th by 1pm**