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PSC 352.01: American Political Thought

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science
American Political Thought

PSC UG352

Summer 1st session 2008
M-TR 1:30-3:20pm

Dr. Grey
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LA 352
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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

**Paine, Common Sense

**Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (on-line copies available)

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 analytical essay examining a particular American thinker's assumptions about human nature, 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 analytical essay assessing a particular thinker's values and political principles.

Course Grading: The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, attending the class lectures and participating in class discussion.

Each student will submit and may be called upon to orally defend **one take-home analytical essay** (40% of course grade), not to exceed 4 double-spaced pages. Please see schedule below for topics.

In addition, each student will complete **one midterm** (25% of course grade) and a **final** (35%.)

- Plus/Minus Grades will be used based on the following: 100-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-87= B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77= C+; 76-73= C; 72-70=C-; 69-67=D+; 66-63=D; 62-60=D-; 59< =F
- If student elects to take course as a Pass or No Pass, they should be aware that a total of 69 pts. or lower will be a NP.
- Please see me and UM catalog p. 21 for criteria on Incomplete Grades.
- *All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.*

Class Schedule

- 5/19 Introduction/"*New World Man & Woman*"
- 5/20 *Puritanism in Massachusetts: the Calvinist Theocrats*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government, 54-76.
Recommend:
Miller and Johnson, The Puritans);
Randolph S. Bourne, "The Puritan's Will to Power," from
War and the Intellectuals.
- 5/21 *Roger William's and Religious Dissent; Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions;*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government, 66-70;
Recommend:
Miller and Johnson, The Puritans,
- 5/22 *Essays (due 5/21): "Puritanism is un-American?"***
- 5/25 Monday * * * * * No Class * * * * * Memorial Day Holiday * * * * ***

6/16 *Sumner and Laissez-Faire & Post-Civil War America*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529
*Bellamy's Looking Backward

6/17- *Bellamy and Socialism*
6/18 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536
*Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)

**6/18 *Essays (due 6/17): Is Bellamy's utopia possible? Is it desirable?
In answering these questions, please discuss what practical and
theoretical problems that appear in his vision of the future.***

6/18 *Parables of American Discourse*

*****Final Thursday, June 18th at 1:30pm ******