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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
Fall 2008
T/TR 12:40-2pm

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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
4. Paine, Common Sense
5. Thoreau's Civil Disobedience
6. Fac Packet: "The Puritans"; 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 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 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)

Course Grading: The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, attending the class lectures and participating in class discussion (***10%** of course grade.)

Each student will submit **one take-home analytical essay** (25% of course grade), not to exceed 4 double-spaced pages. Please see schedule below for topics.

In addition, each student will complete **two midterms** (30% of course grade) and a take-home **final** (35%.)

Graduate Students, in addition to completing the above assignments, will submit a 10-15 page research paper that incorporates the secondary literature on a particular thinker &/or theoretical issue in consultation with the professor. This paper will include an introduction that clearly identifies a question or issue and its significance to American political thought, and will use the appropriate primary & secondary literature to support the paper's thesis.

- 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: Tentative

8/26	Introduction
8/28	<p><i>"New World Man": the Study of American Political Thought</i> Read: Robert McCloskey, "American Political Thought and the Study of Politics, <i>The American Political Science Review</i>, 56 (March 1957), 115-29. This article may be downloaded from JSTOR. Recommend Film Rentals: 'Paint Your Wagon,' 'Mr. Deeds Goes to Town,' and 'Horse Whisperer'</p>
9/2-9/4	<p><i>Puritanism in Massachusetts: the Calvinist Theocrats</i> Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government</u>, 54-66; Miller and Johnson, <u>The Puritans</u>, 194-214 (in packet); Randolph S. Bourne, "The Puritan's Will to Power," from <u>War and the Intellectuals</u> , 156-161 (in packet.)</p>
9/9	<p><i>Roger William's and Religious Dissent</i> Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government</u>, 66-70; Miller and Johnson, <u>The Puritans</u>, 214-225 (in packet.)</p>
9/11	<p><i>Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions;</i> Essays due: "Puritanism is un-American?"</p>
9/16-9/18	<p><i>War of Independence</i> Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government...</u>, 88-121; Recommend: Bailyn, <u>The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution</u></p>
9/18-9/23	<p><i>Thomas Paine and Natural Rights/ Problem of Union</i> Read: Paine, <u>Common Sense</u></p>
9/25	<p><i>Problems of Paine</i> Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government...</u>, 144-148, 152-157. Essays due: Why might historians and scholars disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"</p>

*** * * * * Midterm #1 September 30th Tuesday * * * * ***

10/2 *US Constitutional Thought: Hamilton, Madison, and the Problem of Union*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 178-180;
Hamilton, The Federalist, Nos. 15, 23, 31, 33, 70.

10/7- *Madison & the Constitutional Republic*
10/9 Read: Madison, The Federalist, Nos. 10 & 51

10/9- *The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists*
10/14 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 227-250, 285-290.
Essays due: What theoretical difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?

10/16 *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

10/21 *Hamilton, Marshall, and National Supremacy*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government, 295-324.

10/21- *Jeffersonian Democracy*
10/23 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 329-351

10/28 *The Jacksonian Movement*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 361-395, 425-431.

10/30 *Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 409-415.
Essays due: Based on your readings of Emerson's essays, do you have his philosophy fundamentally radical or conservative? Explain

*** * * * * November 4th Election Day * * * * * NO Class * * * * ***

11/6 *The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments*

*** * * * * November 11th Veterans Day * * * * * NO Class * * * * ***

11/23 *John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities*
Reading: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 453-462

*** * * * * Midterm #2 November 18th Tuesday * * * * ***

11/20- *Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience*
11/25 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 438-453;
H.D. Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 109-137 (in packet.)
Essays due: "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic thought."

*** * * * * Thanksgiving Break November 26-28th * * * * ***

- 12/2 *Sumner and Laissez-Faire*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529
*Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 12/4 *Bellamy and Socialism*
Recommend: Michael Harrington, Socialism, Chap. VI, "The
American Exception"
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536
*Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)

*****Final Due Monday December 8th by 5pm *****