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PSC 352.01: American Political Thought

Ramona Grey

University of Montana - Missoula, ramona.grey@umontana.edu

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science
American Political Thought

PSC UG352
Spring 2008

Dr. Grey
Office Hrs MWF 11-12
LA 352
email: ramona.grey@umontana.edu
Phone: 243-2702

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"; 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 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 3 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%).

* Cautionary note: if you are absent more than 3xs, three points will be deducted for every absence thereafter. Excused absences require an athletic or medical note.

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

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1/23 | Introduction |
| 1/25-
1/28 | " <i>New World Man</i> ": <i>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' |
| 1/28-
2/1 | <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.) |
| 2/4 | <i>John Wise & congregationalism</i>
Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government</u> ...pp. 70-76. |
| 2/6 | <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.) |
| 2/8 | <i>Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions;</i>
<i>Essays due 2/8: "Puritanism is un-American?"</i> |
| 2/11-
2/13 | <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> |

2/15- *Thomas Paine and Natural Rights/ Problem of Union*
2/20 Read: Paine, Common Sense

*****2/18 **No Class-- President's Day*******

2/22 *Problems of Paine*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 144-148, 152-157.
Essays due 2/22: Why might historians and scholars disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"

***** **Midterm #1 February 25th Monday*******

2/27 *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.

2/29- *Madison & the Constitutional Republic*
3/3 Read: Madison, The Federalist, Nos. 10 & 51

3/5- *The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists*
3/7 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 227-250, 285-290.
Essays due 3/7: What theoretical difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?

3/ 10 *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

3/12 *Hamilton, Marshall, and National Supremacy*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government, 295-324.

3/14- *Jeffersonian Democracy*
3/17 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 329-351
Essays due 3/17: "Farmers, whose interests are entirely agricultural . . . are the true representatives of the great American interest, and are alone to be relied upon for expressing proper American sentiments." What are these 'proper American sentiments' that Jefferson is referring to? Why does Jefferson link political virtue with farmers? Is he faith in them justified, especially when considering the political interests of farmers today?

3/19- *The Jacksonian Movement*
3/21 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 361-395, 425-431.

***** **Spring Break March 24th - March 30th*******

3/31- *Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism*
4/2 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 409-415.
Essays due 4/2: Is Emerson's philosophy essentially radical or conservative? Explain

4/4 *The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments*

******* Midterm #2 April 7th Monday*******

4/9- *John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities*

4/11 Reading: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 453-462

4/14- *Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience*

4/16 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 438-453;

H.D. Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 109-137 (in
packet.)

Essays: due 4/16: "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience
raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic
thought."

4/18 Webster, *Lincoln and the Cause of Union*

Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 462-472, 479-482,
484-501, *Bellamy's Looking Backward

4/21- *Sumner and Laissez-Faire*

4/23 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529

*Bellamy's Looking Backward

4/25 Western Migration

4/28- *Bellamy and Socialism*

4/30 Recommend: Michael Harrington, Socialism, Chap. VI, "The
American Exception"

Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536

*Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)

5/2 *Parables of American Discourse*

*****Final Due Tuesday May 6th at 10am **** Please see next page for instructions**

Final
(35% of total grade)
Bellamy's *Looking Backward*

Format: essay should comprise **4-5** typed, double-spaced pages. Please use 12-10 pt. Font.

I. Purpose

- A. Objective: Provide an analytical essay comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* with the thinkers and ideas we have covered in the course. An interpretive essay is not a book review or an editorial. A good essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing the extent Bellamy borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of other American political thinkers (probably no more than two of them).

II. Content

A. Description & Thesis (15% of essay value)

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 (65% of paper grade)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Among the *political thinkers & theories* we have studied this semester, *who* is Bellamy addressing? In other words, what political values/ideas of his predecessors does Bellamy embrace and what ideas does he reject. Why?

For instance, 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 versus a socialist one? (* *These questions are only a suggested list to help you get started, but do not feel confined to only them.*)

C. Conclusion (20% 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 4 pages should be on analysis and 1-2 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

Please include a complete bibliography of all books used for this paper. Please avoid citing Wikkipedia or giving the reader dictionary definitions.