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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 352
Spring 2001
MWF 1:10-2
email: rgrey@selway.umt.edu

Dr. Grey
Office Hrs MW 2-4pm
Office: LA 353
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"; 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.) This includes being prepared to discuss the readings and essays.

Each student will submit *one analytical essay* (25% of course grade), not to exceed 3 double-spaced pages. The essay is due no later than the class period before the scheduled oral presentations. Selected essays will orally presented and defended. However, all students are expected to critique their colleagues' work. Students will have an opportunity to revised and resubmitted the essay. If your essay is turned in late or if you are absent the day that we are scheduled to discuss your essay topic, you will not get credit for it. *No make-up essays accepted.*

In addition, each student will complete on time a take-home *midterm* (25% of course grade) and a *final* (40%.)

* **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.

Class Schedule

- 1/29 Introduction
- 1/31-
2/2 "*New World Man*": *the Study of American Political Thought*
Recommend Film Rentals: 'Paint Your Wagon,' 'Mr. Deeds Goes to
Town,' and 'Horse Whisperer'
- 2/2-
2/7 *Puritanism in Massachusetts: the Calvinist Theocrats*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 54-66;
Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, 194-214 (in packet);
Randolph S. Bourne, "The Puritan's Will to Power," from
War and the Intellectuals , 156-161 (in packet.)
- 2/9 *Roger William's and Religious Dissent*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 66-70;
Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, 214-225 (in packet.)
- 2/12 *Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions*
- 2/14-
2/16 *Discuss Essays* (*due 2/12): "Puritanism is unAmerican."
- 2/19 No Class-- President's Day

- 2/21- *War of Independence*
2/23 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 88-121;
Recommend: Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution
- 2/26- *Thomas Paine and Natural Rights/ Problem of Union*
2/28 Read: Paine, Common Sense
- 3/2 *Problems of Paine*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 144-148, 152-157.
Discuss Essays(due 2/25): Why might historians and scholars disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"
- 3/5- *US Constitutional Thought: Hamilton, Madison, and the Problem of Union*
3/7 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 178-180;
Hamilton, The Federalist, Nos. 15, 23, 31, 33, 70.
- 3/9- *Madison & the Constitutional Republic*
3/12 Read: Madison, The Federalist, Nos. 10 & 51
- 3/12- *The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists*
3/14 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 227-250, 285-290.
- 3/16 *Discuss Essays* (due 3/14): What theoretical difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?
- Spring Break 3/17-3/25*
- ***** Midterm Due March 26th *****
- 3/26 *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
- 3/28 *Political Thought of the Formative Years: Hamilton, Marshall and National Supremacy*
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 299-323
- 3/30- *Jeffersonian Democracy*
4/2 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 329-351

- 4/4 **Discuss Essays(due 4/2):** 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?
- 4/6- **The Jacksonian Movement**
4/9 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 361-395, 425-431.
- 4/11 **The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments**
- 4/13- **John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities**
4/16 Reading: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 453-462
- 4/18- **Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism**
4/20 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 409-415.
- 4/23 **Discuss Essays (due 4/20):** Is Emerson's philosophy essentially radical or conservative? Explain
- 4/25- **Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience**
4/27 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 438-453;
 H.D. Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 109-137 (in packet.)
- 4/30 **Discuss Essays (due 4/30):** "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic thought."
- 5/2 **Lincoln and the Cause of Union**
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 462-472, 479-482, 484-501, *Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 5/4- **Sumner and Laissez-Faire**
5/7 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529
 *Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 5/9- **Bellamy and Socialism**
5/11 Recommend: Michael Harrington, Socialism, Chap. VI, "The American Exception"
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536
 *Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)

Final Due May 16th Wednesday by 5pm * (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 16th by 5pm