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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 352
Spring 1998
MWF 12:10-1

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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 the 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 inquiry. 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. Packet, "The Puritans"

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. Present and orally defend (and if necessary revise) a 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 assignment (as well as 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*, analyzing what, if any, are the distinctively "American" ethical values and political themes. (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 and orally defend in class **one critical essay** (25% of course grade), not to exceed 3 double-spaced pages. The essay is due no later than the class period **before** you are scheduled to orally present it. This essay can be revised and resubmitted after oral defense. If your essay is turned in late or if you are absent the day that we are scheduled to discuss your essay, 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

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1/26 | Introduction |
| 1/28 | "New World Man": the Study of American Political Thought
Read: *H.D. Thoreau, <u>Walden and Selected Essays</u> , 592-630 (in packet) |
| 1/30-
2/2 | Puritanism in Massachusetts: the Calvinist Theocrats
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 | Roger William's and Religious Dissent
Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government...</u> , 66-70;
Miller and Johnson, <u>The Puritans</u> , 214-225 (in packet.) |
| 2/6 | Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions |
| 2/9 | Discuss Essays (due 2/6): "Puritanism is unAmerican." |
| 2/11-
2/13 | War of Independence
Read: Mason and Baker, <u>Free Government...</u> , 88-121;
Recommend: Bailyn, <u>The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution</u> |
| 2/16 | <i>Washington-Lincoln Holiday</i> |

- 2/18 Thomas Paine and Natural Rights
Read: Paine, Common Sense
- 2/20 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 144-148, 152-157.
Discuss Essays(due 2/18): What seems to disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"
- 2/23- US Constitutional Thought: Hamilton, Madison, and the Problem of
2/25 Union
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 178-180;
Hamilton, The Federalist, Nos. 15, 23, 31, 33, 70.
- 2/27 Discuss Essays (due 2/25): "So far from our having a right to do everything we please, under a motion of liberty, liberty itself is limited and confined— but limited and confined only by laws which are at the same time both its foundation and support." (J. Boucher)
- 3/2- Madison & the Constitutional Republic
3/4 Read: Madison, The Federalist, Nos. 10 & 51
- 3/6 Discuss Essays (due 3/4): What theoretical difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?
- 3/9 The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 227-250, 285-290.
- 3/11 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
- * Midterm Due March 13th
- 3/13 Discuss Essays (due 3/11): "Some provision must be made in the Constitution, in favor of justice, to compel all to respect the common right, the public good, the universal law, in preference to all private considerations." (J. Adams)

Spring Break 3/16-3/20

- 3/23 Political Thought of the Formative Years: Hamilton, Marshall and National Supremacy
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 299-323
- 3/25- Jeffersonian Democracy
3/27 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 329-351
- 3/30 Discuss Essays(due 3/27): 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?
- 4/1- The Jacksonian Movement
4/3 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 361-395, 425-431.
- 4/6 Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 409-415.
- 4/8 The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments
- 4/10 Discuss Essays (due 4/8): Is Emerson's philosophy fundamentally liberal or conservative? Explain
- 4/13 John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities
Reading: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 453-462
- 4/15- Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience
4/20 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 438-453;
H.D. Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 109-137 (in packet.)
- 4/22 Webster, Lincoln, and the Cause of Union
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 462-472, 479-482, 484-501, *Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 4/24 Discuss Essays (due 4/22): "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic thought."

- 4/27- Sumner and Laissez-Faire
4/29 Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 510-529
*Bellamy's Looking Backward
- 5/1 Read: *Bellamy's Looking Backward
Discuss Essays (due 4/29): Compare and contrast the social theory
of the Puritans with Sumner's.
- 5/4- Bellamy and Socialism
5/6 Recommend: Michael Harrington, Socialism, Chap. VI, "The
American Exception"
Henry George and the Single Tax
Read: Mason and Baker, Free Government..., 531-536
*Bellamy's Looking Backward (finish)
- 5/8 Conclusion: American Parables
- ***Final Due May 12th by 1 pm ****
{see attached}

American Political Thought
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 v. 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 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

A. Additional Reading

Is not necessary. You would be better served to 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 *outside* books used for this paper.

Due May 12th by 1pm