

University of Montana
Department of Political Science
American Political Thought

PSC U352

Spring 2021

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11-11:50am: Remote Synchronous via Zoom

Dr. Grey

Office Hrs MWF 10-10:50 by appt. on Zoom

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, social movements, parties, and individual thinkers that have contributed to the development of an "American tradition" of democratic 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 debate concerning the nature of democratic practices and institutions.

Assigned Texts:

- 1. ISAAC KRAMNICK & THEODORE LOWI (EDS) *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT***
 - 2. BELLAMY, *LOOKING BACKWARD***
 - 3. PAINE, *COMMON SENSE* (RECOMMEND)**
 - 4. THOREAU, *CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE* (RECOMMEND)**
- RECOMMEND: HAMILTON, MADISON, JAY, *THE FEDERALIST PAPERS* (RECOMMEND)**

Course Objectives:

Upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the major pre-Civil War political 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 views on human nature, equality, individual and community rights, the good life, the purpose of government, the function of representation, the role of engaged citizens, and the principle of constitutionalism, etc. The goal of the essay assignment (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 a final essay analysis of proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution. What, if any, are the distinctively "American" values, principles and political themes found in these amendments, and what would major American thinkers say about them. (Please see Final Paper Guidelines at the end of the syllabus.)

Course Grading:

PSCI 352 will be taught as a lecture course remotely via synchronous Zoom & will meet MWF 11am-11:50am. To help you with taking notes, outlines of the lectures will be posted on Moodle following the tentative schedule on the syllabus. The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, attending the class lectures and participating **by raising questions in the chats on Zoom** (*10% of course grade.)

Each student will submit **one take-home analytical essay** (25% of course grade), not to exceed 4-5 double-spaced pages. Please see schedule below for topics.

In addition, each student will complete **two midterms** (30% of course grade & will be posted **on Moodle with deadline**) and a **final paper** (35%) on **“A Constitutional Convention in 2022,”** see pp. 5-8 of syllabus.

The Writing and Public Speaking Center provides one-on-one tutoring to students at all levels and at any time in the writing process. Visit now. Visit often. We're ready when you are. www.umt.edu/writingcenter.

COVID-19 note:

Wearing a mask in class is mandatory. **All students with cough/flu-like symptoms should NOT attempt to come to ANY in-person class.** Although you may still feel able to attend the in-person class, by doing so you put others around you at risk. As healthy undergraduates, you are not the most “at risk sector of our population,” but it is your responsibility to do your part to make sure that you do not transmit the virus to others who might be at risk (including student peers and many faculty and staff who are older and at much greater risk.) If you are sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330, **please let me know if you are sick and will be missing class meetings on Zoom.** Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from University of Montana Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus> UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php> We strongly encourage you to remain vigilant outside the classroom in mitigating the spread of COVID-19

Students taking this course to **fulfill writing the 400 requirements** will be required to revise and *expand their essays into 10-12 pages*. Substantive and grammatical revisions will be expected. The writing grade will be based upon the following writing guidelines and expectations:

- The critical, interpretive essay must provide a **clear thesis** (preferably at the end of the introductory paragraph), indicating the author's main points with regard to the essay question.
- The essay must support the thesis statement with **specific references** to the primary texts, **providing footnotes** for all quoted material and a **bibliography** at the end. Please use Chicago style.
- Students should pay close attention to their **choice of words** in summarizing and clarifying the substance of a political theory (i.e. *the good state* and *a good state* are *not* the same). They must demonstrate awareness of how words can clarify and/or obscure a theorist's principles, illustrations, and, in general, the nature of their political inquiry.

- The first essay draft will be returned with editorial comments. Students are encouraged to talk with me about their essays before revising them.
- Student must include **original essay draft with revised, extended draft**.
- Revised essay will be **graded based upon:** grammar, spelling, appropriate choice of words, transitions between paragraphs, use of quoted material to support their interpretation, accuracy in paraphrasing, logical organization of ideas and points, and clarity.
- Only **one revision** is allowed. Please proof read the final drafts for any grammatical, spelling, or typos before turning it in.

Our Social Contract: "Life is short, but there is always time for courtesy," Ralph Waldo Emerson

As J.S. Mill reminds us, "what we achieve depends less on the amount of time we possess, that on the use we make of our time." So let this be our social contract between us. For my part, I will take all of my teaching responsibilities with the utmost seriousness. In return, you need to read all of the material with care, to actively listen, to raise questions, and to reflect on what you have learned. In addition, I expect you to come to class on time, to stay for the entire lecture, and to refrain from any behavior that might distract me or the students around you. Please do not talk with your neighbors or read newspapers during the lecture. Please turn off your cell phones.

Masc. Items:

- 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 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>.
- Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Tentative Class Schedule

- 1/11 Introduction to American Political Thought
- 1/13-22 "New World Man": the Study of American Political Thought
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, "Introduction," pp. xxv-xxxviii; Robert McCloskey, "American Political Thought and the Study of Politics," posted on Moodle.
Recommend Films: 'Paint Your Wagon' and 'Horse Whisperer'

*****Monday January 18*****No Class—Martin Luther King Day*****

- 1/20- Puritanism in Massachusetts: the Calvinist Theocrats
1/27 Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, pp. 2-19; pp 41-42;62.
Recommend: Perry Miller & Thomas Johnson, *The Puritans*, vol 1, New York: Harper, 1963; Randolph S. Bourne, "The Puritan's Will to Power," from *WAR AND THE INTELLECTUALS*, 156-161.
- 1/29 *Roger William's and Religious Dissent*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, 19-21;32-41.
- 2/1 *Separation of Church & State: Three Traditions;*
Essays due 2/1: "Puritanism is un-American?"
- 2/3- *War of Independence*
2/5 Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, 68-94;115-118.
Bailyn, *THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1968)*; Jack Rakove, *REVOLUTIONARIES 2010*);
Gordon Wood, *THE RADICALISM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1991)*
- 2/8- *Thomas Paine and Natural Rights*
2/10 Read: Paine, *COMMON SENSE*; Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, pp. 95-115.
Recommend: Paine's *AGE OF REASON*
- 2/12 *Problems of Paine/Problem of Union*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, 119-145.
Essays due 2/12: Why might historians and scholars disqualify Paine as "a full-fledged founding father?"

*****Monday February 15th*****No Class-- President's Day*****

- 2/17 *US Constitutional Thought: Hamilton, Madison, and the Problem of Union*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, *AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*, 145-210.

***** Midterm #1 Friday, February 19th: No Class & Exam posted on Moodle *****

- 2/22-
2/24 *Madison & the Constitutional Republic*
Read: Madison, **THE FEDERALIST**, Nos. 15, 31, & 33 (can be found at:
<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1786-1800/the-federalist-papers/>)
- 2/26-
3/1 *The Constitutional Debate: Federalists v. Anti-Federalists*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 210-242.
Essays due 3/1: “The public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose.” First, what did Madison mean by this? Second, what difficulties can be found in Madison's theory of representation?
- Or
- Essays: due 3/1:* “While founding the Constitution on popular sovereignty, at the same time, the framers constituted a new government so that the people would speak, if at all, in a muted and incoherent voice.” (Currin Shields) In light of your reading of the *Federalist* papers, please discuss how Madison perhaps tried to create just such a government, and *why*. Next, is this statement still relevant today? Are there political movements that Madison didn't foresee that would make the public voice “less muted and incoherent?” Or if not, why not?
- 3/3 *John Adams and Mixed Government*
Recommend: Joseph Dorfman, "The Regal Republic of John Adams," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 59, June 1947: 227-247: on Moodle.
- 3/5-
3/8 *Hamilton, Marshall, and National Supremacy*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 245-295.
- 3/10-
3/12 *Jeffersonian Democracy*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 295-340.
Essays due 3/12: “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 associate political virtue with farmers? Is he faith in them justified, especially when considering rural farmers today?
- Essays due 3/12:** “Jefferson may have more faithfully mirrored the ‘American political mind,’ Adams was by far the better theorist.” Discuss with reference to their major contributions to American political thought.
- 3/15-
3/17 *The Jacksonian Movement*
Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 341-344; 356-386.

***** *Midterm #2 Friday, March 19th: No class & Exam Posted on Moodle* *****

3/22- *Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism*
3/24 Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 386-409; 422-452; 749-755
Essays due 3/24: Is Emerson's philosophy essentially radical or conservative? Are there any distinctly liberal ideas found in his writings? Explain—see also text: pp. 1092-1101;1330-1337;.

*Bellamy's **LOOKING BACKWARD**

3/26 *The Slavery Controversy: Pro-Slavery Arguments*
Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 453-510.

3/29- *John C. Calhoun and Concurrent Majorities*
3/31 Reading: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 513-559.

***** *Friday, April 2nd Break: No Class* *****

4/5- *Anti-Slavery Arguments: H.D. Thoreau and Civil Disobedience*
4/9 Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 409-422; H.D. Thoreau, **CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**, read all at:
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7EHYPER2/thoreau/civil.html>
Essays: due 4/9: "Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience raises but does not resolve a crucial problem in democratic thought." What is that problem?

4/12- *Sumner and Laissez-Faire*
4/16 Read: Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 598-646; 708-749.
*Bellamy's **LOOKING BACKWARD** (finish)

4/19- *Bellamy and Socialism*
4/23 Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 766-771; 915-919.
Recommend: Michael Harrington, **SOCIALISM**, Chap. VI, "The American Exception"

4/23 *Parables of American Discourse*
Read: **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**, 925-971.

****Final Due Wednesday April 28th at 12 pm, uploaded to Moodle on final date*****

Political Science 352

Spring 2021

Final

(35% of total grade)

“A Constitutional Convention in 2022”

Format: essay should comprise **6-7 typed**, double-spaced pages. Please use 12-11 pt. Font.

I. Purpose

- A. Objective: Provide an analytical essay the pros and cons of the ideas/themes of the any 3 of the proposed constitutional amendments provided at a

hypothetical U.S. Constitutional in 2022 *listed below*. In considering the pros & cons of these amendments, you will need to draw on thinkers and writers we have covered in the course. A good essay supports its analysis with direct references to the assigned readings and novel, showing to what extent and on what grounds thinkers or political movements covered in class would (partially or completely) embrace and/or reject these proposals, and your position on them as well.

II. Content:

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

Identify and provide only a summary and rationale of the proposed amendments before a hypothetical constitutional convention. (One short paragraph should be sufficient.) At the end of your first paragraph, please provide a clear thesis statement of the three (3 only amendments) you wish to examine in the paper.

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 and read this semester, *who* would most be interested in the proposed amendments you are examining? In other words, what political issues/problems and values/ideas does the amendment attempt to address? Based on their writings and arguments, what would particular thinkers think about this amendment? Would they support it, entirely? Why? Or would they add provisos to it and, if so, what would those be? Would they reject it entirely? Why?

When examining a proposed amendment, for example, consider what are the underlying assumptions about human nature that this proposal appears to be making? What is the system of the government that this seeks to promote? Is it complimentary to the *value* system of American society? How so? If not, why not? Or consider, for instance, what American citizens in twenty-first century need or what regarding politics, the rule of law, and socio-economic conditions of the nineteenth-century. What, is anything does the amendment tell us about the relations of employer and employee, men and women, parents and children in society today? (* *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)

Do you the amendments discussed are possible **or** desirable? Why, or why not? Do you see political movements and/or events in the present American society that could result in the adoption of such amendments?

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. You may also draw upon unassigned readings in the Kramnick & Lowi, **AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT** text and American writers not covered in class provided these are relevant.

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 (if secondary sources are cited.)

Please include a complete bibliography of all books used for this paper.

Proposed amendments at the Constitutional Convention of 2022

TBA

Essay Writing & Grading Guidelines:
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1st: Please: put the essay question/statement on the top of your paper. . .

Thesis & Transitions – 20%

- Clear, thoughtful, and coherent thesis statement that addresses essay question/statement
- Thesis placed at end of 1st paragraph
- Stays focused on essay topic

Analysis – 65%

- Strong supporting evidence, drawn from reading material for the **thesis**
- Provides relevant information, clearly presented
- Fully developed, *interesting* arguments and points
- Analysis and conclusions are logical and precise
- Shows that the writer understands the author's argument, logic, and moral reasoning before critiquing or defending his/her argument
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Format, Word Choice, Mechanics & Quotations 15%

- Format: 3 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, good transition sentences between paragraphs and tight topic organization
- Quotations: Inserted in body with page number, relevant to point, not taken out of context, best summary of thinker's view

Don't editorialize! Give us nothing but your opinion w/no reference to our reading.

Don't give us a book review! No rehashing of lecture notes or quote for the sake of quoting. # (Too much narration/description.)

Don't quote Wikipedia or Dictionary for definitions! Instead provide your own ideas and criteria for the meaning of key political terms.

Some General Tips for Good Writing:

1. Good writing stems from good thinking. Clarify your intent & major ideas before you start. Don't expect that your design will materialize during writing.

A good outline can help organize your ideas. Sketch out your major points and their logical relationship.

2. Be a master builder. Your building blocks are sentences and paragraphs. Each essay should have a specific theme; each paragraph should have a specific purpose regarding that theme; and each sentence should have a specific purpose in its paragraph.

3. Good writing results from revision. First drafts are almost always lousy writing. Samuel Johnson said, "What is written in haste is read without pleasure." Please note!

4. Become your own best editor. If you are committed to your ideas, you will be willing to revise and revise until they are expressed clearly.

5. "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity," Henry David Thoreau admonished. His advice applies to composition as well as to life. Use clear-cut syntax and active voice (passive voice tends to distract & obscure.) Avoid unnecessary verbiage, such as "first and foremost" instead of "first." A good writer, said Thomas Jefferson, can use one word instead of three.

6. Be precise in your diction. Avoid a \$100 word when a \$5 word will do. "Never," said George Orwell, "use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent."

7. And "if it is possible to cut a word out," Orwell added, "cut it out." Carefully selected nouns and verbs rarely require adjectives and adverbs.

8. Don't be a hedger. If you believe in your purpose and conclusions, be positive and bold. Tentativeness undercuts your credibility. Avoid, for example, "it seems," "perhaps," "somewhat," "it appears," etc. I call these 'chicken words.'

9. Keep your reader in mind. Guide the reader through your train of thought. Keep the reader awake by varying the length and beginning of sentences. Keep the reader involved by providing interesting examples, transitions, and conclusions. Use short and apt quotations and paraphrase the rest.

10. Be technically correct. Grammar and spelling errors tell the reader that you are careless. Read your writing aloud to catch your mistakes.