

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

POS 710: Seminar in American National Government: Principles

Fall 2006

Tu 5:30-8:20 p.m., WRI B224

Professor David Fott
appointment
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Hours: Tu 2:45-3:30 p.m., WTh 2:45-4:45 p.m., or by

E-mail:

This course explores the principles that underlie the American regime and that inform enduring political controversies. Foremost among those principles are the equality of human beings, liberty conceived as rights, and government by the consent of the governed. Our primary goal will be to understand those principles as they have been put into practice in America. We shall also ask the following questions: Do our practices fully conform to the principles of the Declaration of Independence? How should we deal with conflicts among those principles?

Readings:

A. The following books have been ordered for purchase:

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. Edited by Clinton Rossiter.

Signet Classic, 2003.

Ralph Ketcham, ed. *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*. Signet Classic, 2003.

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Edited and translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba

Winthrop. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Paul M. Angle, ed. *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.

John Dewey. *The Political Writings*. Edited by Debra Morris and Ian Shapiro. Hackett, 1993.

B. The library has on reserve the other readings. In general these readings comprise two groups: (1) books, some of which are listed in parentheses below; (2) shorter pieces. Readings marked with * are available on two-hour reserve; readings marked with + are available on electronic reserve from any computer on the Internet.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Week 1: August 29
Introduction

Declaration of Independence

Week 2: September 5

The Founding: First Principles

*Declaration of Independence (*The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 235-41)

*Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chaps. 1-3, 8, 9, 18, 19

Articles of Confederation (Ketcham, pp. 357-64)

United States Constitution

Federalist 49

*Jefferson, letter to Madison, September 6, 1789 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 444-51)

Week 3: September 12

The Founding: The Large Republic and Other Topics

Federalist 1, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 23, 37-39, 45, 47, 48, 51

John DeWitt, essays 1, 2 (Ketcham, pp. 189-98)

Henry, speech, June 5, 1788 (Ketcham, pp. 199-208)

Centinel, no. 1 (Ketcham, pp. 227-37)

Address of the Pennsylvania Minority (Ketcham, pp. 237-56)

Letters from the Federal Farmer 1, 2 (Ketcham, pp. 256-69)

Brutus, essays 1, 6, 16 (Ketcham, pp. 269-87, 331-35)

Week 4: September 19

The Founding: Representation, Executive Power, and Other Topics

+Burke, speech, November 3, 1774 (excerpt)

Federalist 35, 55, 57, 58, 62, 63, 68, 70, 72, 78, 84

*Jefferson, letter to Madison, March 15, 1789 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 438-40)

*Jefferson, letter to Adams, October 28, 1813 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 533-39)

Cato, letter 5 (Ketcham, pp. 317-21)

Brutus, essays 11, 12, 15 (Ketcham, pp. 293-309)

Speeches of Melancton Smith, June 20-27, 1788 (Ketcham, pp. 336-56)

Week 5: September 26

The Founding: Establishing a National Government

*Mason and Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, 4th ed., pp. 295-338, 342-51

*Jefferson, The Kentucky Resolutions, 1798 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 281-89)

Week 6: October 3

The Founding: Evaluations

+Diamond, "Ethics and Politics: The American Way"

+Will, *Statecraft as Soulcraft*, chap. 4

+Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (excerpt)

+Bessette, "Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government" (Goldwin

and Schambra, *How Democratic Is the Constitution?* pp. 102-16)

+Wolin, "Democracy without the Citizen"

+Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, chap. 1

Week 7: October 10

Tocqueville: Survey of America

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1: introduction; pt. 1

Short paper due

Week 8: October 17

Tocqueville: Threats to Liberty and Remedies to Threats

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1: pt. 2, chaps. 1-4, 5 (pp. 187-92), 6-9, 10 (pp. 379-84);

conclusion

Week 9: October 24

Tocqueville: The Influence of Democracy on Society

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2: pt. 1, chaps. 1, 2, 5, 8, 20; pt. 2; pt. 3, chaps. 1, 8-14, 17-19, 21; pt. 4

Week 10: October 31

The Civil War: The Nature of the Union

*Mason and Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, pp. 473-88, 497-500

*Post, introduction (“*A Disquisition on Government*” and *Selections from the “Discourse,”* pp. vii-xxx)

*Calhoun, Fort Hill Address (excerpt) (*The Essential Calhoun*, pp. 274-77)

*Calhoun, Resolutions on Abolition and the Union (*Essential Calhoun*, pp. 373-74)

*Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government* (*Calhoun: Basic Documents*, pp. 29-58, 79-97)

Week 11: November 7

The Civil War: Slavery

*Mason and Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, pp. 432-38, 441-53, 456-72

*Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 18 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 214-15)

Dred Scott v. Sandford

“A Reader’s Companion to the Lincoln-Douglas Debates”

Angle, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*, pp. 1-9, 12-25, 102-44, 152-56, 216-20, 235-36,

265-70, 285-304, 308-16, 319-21, 332-35, 343-47

Week 12: November 14

Equality and Privacy

*Mason and Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, pp. 119-21, 421-25, 438-41, 551-54, 568-72, 592-96,

741-44

Plessy v. Ferguson

Brown v. Board of Education

Regents v. Bakke

Grutter v. Bollinger

*Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, introduction

Dothard v. Rawlinson

United States v. Virginia

Roe v. Wade

Lawrence v. Texas

Week 13: November 21

Freedoms of Religion and Speech

*Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 17 (*Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 208-13)

+Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments”

Engel v. Vitale

Welsh v. United States

Wisconsin v. Yoder

+Madison, "Report on the Virginia Resolutions of 1798" (excerpt)

Schenck v. United States

Abrams v. United States

Dennis v. United States

McConnell v. Federal Election Commission

Week 14: November 28

Progressivism and Pragmatism

*Mason and Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, pp. 510-17, 531-36, 555-67

Dewey, *The Political Writings*, pp. 1-19, 32-47, 97-132, 173-91, 210-29, 48-58

Long paper due

Week 15: December 5

Postmodernism and Its Critics

+Rorty, "Truth and Freedom: A Reply to Thomas McCarthy"

+Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" (excerpt)

+Rorty, "That Old-Time Philosophy"

+Mansfield, "Democracy and the Great Books"

*Pangle, *The Ennobling of Democracy*, pp. 1-10

*Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, pp. 25-43

Format:

Each session will consist of discussion of the assigned reading. Thus it is *imperative* that you come to class having done the assigned reading for that week.

Assignments:

Written assignments include a short paper, 5 to 6 pages, on a topic to be assigned (worth 20% of your final grade), and a long paper, 20 to 25 pages (worth 50%). For the long paper you may write on a topic assigned by me or on a topic of your choice, with my prior approval. Each student will be responsible for giving a critical analysis (not a summary) of the readings of a week at the beginning of class, which will serve as a basis for discussion (not a written assignment; worth a total of 10% of the final grade). Your participation in the discussions will count for 20% of your final grade. Each of these components will be graded on a scale from A to F. You must complete both written assignments in order to pass the course. Your grade will be reduced if you have more than one unexcused absence; lateness normally counts as an absence.

Extensions for submitting papers will be granted only in cases of emergency (e.g., personal illness, preferably with a note from a doctor; serious illness in one's family). The grade on a paper will be reduced by one increment on the scale for each day the paper is late without an approved extension (e.g., a paper of B+ quality will receive a B if it is one day late; a paper of A quality will receive a A-/B+ if it is two days late).