

San José State University
Department of Political Science
POLS 163, American Political Thought, Spring 2017

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Sara M. Benson
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Office Hours:	Monday/Wednesday 12:00 – 1:15
Class Days/Time:	Monday and Wednesday 10:30-11:45
Classroom:	DMH 161

Course Description

This course offers students ideas, theories, and concepts from American political thought in order to critically examine the origins and development of American politics and American political consciousness. The course focuses on theories of power and ideas about belonging as they emerged from and across republican, utilitarian, Puritan, and liberal ideas about the role of states, citizens, and rights in American society. We examine the origins and contradictions of legal status in the United States by thinking about rights-bearing subjects and their histories within slavery, punishment, and sovereignty and the debates that have informed ideas that are now part of the taken-for-granted landscape of American political and social life.

*Student success in this course is dependent on an active engagement with the reading materials. The primary goal of the course is to introduce students to the major debates within American political theory. This is a reading-intensive course that focuses on primary texts and requires students to spend time learning and describing the internal coherence of an argument. It also requires that students craft analytical responses to primary and secondary sources in political theory. These writing assignments will allow students to deepen their initial readings and to synthesize the arguments of the authors into conversations. Exams and response papers will ask students to define the relationships between these thinkers and to develop new ideas and new modes of inquiry. **Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities.***

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO 1 Explain the development of several themes of American Political Thought over time.

CLO 2 Read, understand, summarize and critique several of the most significant texts on the development of American Political Thought.

CLO 3 Apply an understanding of the development of American Political Thought to contemporary political issues.

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes

Breadth Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

Application Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

Disciplinary methods Student should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.

Communication Skills Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.

Citizenship Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

Required Texts/Readings

Kramnick and Lowi, *American Political Thought*. Norton.

Classroom Protocol

Students should attend all class meetings and participate in class exercises, assignments and discussions. During class time, we work collectively to read widely in the field of political theory. Your cell phone should not ring. You should not text under the desk. You do not need your computer. Please bring your course materials, a notebook, and a pen to class. If you must enter late, please be prepared to enter quietly and without disruption. Please be respectful of your colleagues during class discussions and exams.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>.

Please review the information about university policies on plagiarism contained above, which may result in a failing grade. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

Course Requirements, Assignments, Grading Policy

Assignment One: Midterm	25% of course grade
Assignment Two: Quizzes	25% of course grade
Assignment Three: Critical Essay	25% of course grade
Assignment Four: Final Exam	25% of course grade

Assignment One: Midterm (CLO 3)

The midterm will be comprised of concepts and terms from the course as well as quotes. Students should define the terms and unpack and attribute quotes to authors.

Assignment Two: Quizzes (CLO 2)

There will be six unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. You will be asked to identify and explain readings, themes, and authors listed in the course schedule. The lowest quiz score will be dropped.

Assignment Three: Critical Essay (CLOs 1 and 3)

Students will choose from the distributed list of prompts and compose a five-page essay (1500 words) that links American political thought to contemporary issues in American political life. Essays should be submitted via Canvas, where they will be checked for proper citations.

Assignment Four: Final Exam (CLOs 1 and 2)

Students will be asked to unpack, explain, and reference a series of ten quotations from the readings. Each answer should consist of a substantive paragraph (5-7 sentences) and show a deep engagement with the readings and themes from the course. The exam is cumulative and comprehensive.

Grading Information and Policies

No late papers will be accepted.

No extra credit is available.

97-100	A+	93-96	A	90-92	A-
87-89	B+	83-86	B	80-82	B-
77-79	C+	73-76	C	70-72	C-
63-69	D	60-62	D-	<60	F

Course Schedule

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Monday, January 30	Introductions and Course Opening
Wednesday, February 1	<p>Introduction to American Political Thought: The Founding Documents</p> <p>Reading: <i>Declaration of Independence</i> (1776) <i>The Articles of Confederation</i> (1778) <i>The Constitution of the United States</i> (1787) <i>The Bill of Rights</i> (1791)</p> <p>*These can be read online or in <i>American Political Thought</i> (hereafter noted as <i>APT</i>) beginning on pages 151, 155, 170, and 281 respectively.</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the discussion of a nation's "founding" relevant to political life? 2. What can the state do to the body of its citizens? What are the limits? 3. What tensions can you identify in these documents with regard to positive and negative liberties? What are the contradictions?
Monday, February 6	<p>Introduction to American Political Thought (continued) (please re-read the documents listed on February 1 using the reading and coding methods outlined in class)</p>
Wednesday, February 8	<p>The Task of Governance: An Overview of Republicanism, Utilitarianism, Natural Rights, and Social Contract Theory</p> <p>Reading: "Part II: The Founding" in <i>APT</i> 91 James Otis, "The Political Theory of the Revolution" in <i>APT</i> 100 Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists" in <i>APT</i> 108 Jonathan Boucher, "On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance" in <i>APT</i> 100 John Adams, "Thoughts on Government" in <i>APT</i> 124</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the theory of natural law and natural right, what is the relationship between law and politics? Which is supreme? How did John Locke influence theories of natural right and social contract? 2. What is republicanism? What is the relationship between republicans and the inventors of the social contract? What is the "agreement" at the root of the contract? Why is the criminal body the limit?

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Compare and contrast natural law and republicanism with utilitarianism and the social contract tradition. 4. What evidence of utilitarianism do you find in Adams?
Monday, February 13	<p>Theories of Confederation and Democracy</p> <p>Reading: “The Great Law of the Peace of the Haudenosaunee” (Articles 27-28, 55-57, and 93-97: https://www.pdx.edu/iroquois-democracy/great-law-of-peace)</p> <p>Chief Joseph “An Indian’s View of Indian Affairs” in <i>APT</i> 928 Chief Joseph, Crazy Horse, and Smohalla, “On Work and Property” in <i>APT</i> 940</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What form of government did the Iroquois practice? Is this federalism? 2. How did the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nation organize themselves politically? What connections can you make between those ideas and the American con/federation? 3. How does Chief Joseph describe his culture and the history of the Niimípu (Nez Perce)? What are his ideas about property and liberty?
Wednesday, February 15	<p>John Adams and Revolution (Screening: <i>John Adams: Episode 2</i>, “Independence”)</p>
Monday, February 20	<p>The Revolution’s Boundaries: Suffrage, Racialized Gender, & Citizenship</p> <p>Reading: Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852) in <i>APT</i> 594</p> <p>John Adams to James Sullivan (1776) at https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-04-02-0091</p> <p>Abigail Adams, “Letter to John Adams,” in <i>APT</i> 506</p> <p>John Adams to Abigail Adams (1776) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0248</p> <p>Abigail Adams to John Adams (1776) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0259</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Douglass, writing in 1852, narrate the moment of the Founding? 2. How does Adams describe voting rights for non-propertied men? 3. What do we learn about gender, race, and status from their correspondence?

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Wednesday, February 22	<p>The Antifederalists and the Opponents of the U.S. Constitution</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Richard Henry Lee, “Letters from a Federal Farmer” (Letter I only) in <i>APT</i> 248 Patrick Henry, “Debate in the Virginia Ratifying Convention” in <i>APT</i> 267 James Madison, “Address to the House of Representatives...” in <i>APT</i> 274 <i>The Bill of Rights</i> (1791) in <i>APT</i> 281 Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849) in <i>APT</i> 484</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did the New Jersey and Virginia Plans differ? Who were the key figures in both movements and what were their visions? Were these democratic visions? Republican? 2. What were the key concerns of the anti-federalists? 3. Describe Patrick Henry’s fear of a standing army and a president who behaves like a king. Explain whether you see connections to today’s political landscape. 4. What connections can you make between the anti-federalist tradition and the later writings of Thoreau? What was his argument for limited government and the end of slavery?
Monday, February 27	<p>Federalism: Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, and <i>The Papers</i></p> <p><i>Federalist Papers</i> 1,10 and and 51</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Hamilton's overview of the Constitution in Nos. 1 and 23? What are the key words and concepts he uses in framing the debate? 2. What is Madison's attitude toward “the people” in Federalist No. 10? What is the chief cause of factions? What is a faction? What is a <i>majority</i> faction? Why is a majority faction his chief concern? 3. What is Jefferson view of proper constitutional governance? 4. Was Madison interested in controlling government or the masses?
Wednesday, March 1	<p>Jefferson and National Ideas on Race Screening of <i>Race: The Power of an Illusion</i> (Episode 2)</p>
Monday, March 6	<p>Jeffersonian Legacies: On Slavery and Punishment Benjamin Rush, “An Address...Upon Slave Keeping” (1773) in <i>APT</i> 536 <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i>, in <i>APT</i> 546</p>
Wednesday, March 8	<p>On <i>Democracy in America</i></p>
Monday, March 13	<p>On <i>Democracy in America</i></p>

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Wednesday, March 15	No class. Instructor at conference.
Monday, March 20	Exam Review
Wednesday, March 22	Midterm Exam
Monday, March 27	Spring Break.
Wednesday, March 29	Spring Break.
Monday, April 3	Discussion of Critical Essay Assignment
Wednesday, April 5	Power in American Politics Excerpt from John Gaventa, <i>Power and Powerlessness</i>
Monday, April 10	Power in American Politics Excerpt from John Gaventa, <i>Power and Powerlessness</i>
Wednesday, April 12	Abolition, Suffrage, and Civic Status Frederick Douglass “Lectures on Slavery” APT 591 <i>Dred Scott v. Sandford</i> (1857) APT 644 Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Peoria, Illinois,” APT 649 Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Dred Scott Decision” (1857) APT 654 Grimke, Letter to the Women of the South Elizabeth Cady Stanton, <i>Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Address to the NY State Legislature</i> , in APT Susan B. Anthony, “Speech About Her Indictment” in APT Thirteenth, Fourteenth, & Fifteenth Amendments to US Constitution, APT 926
Monday, April 17	Progressivism and Participation Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth,” in APT Henry Demarest Lloyd, “Wealth Against Commonwealth,” in APT Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For” in APT W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Immediate Program of the American Negro” in APT 969
Wednesday, April 19	Labor and New Deal Liberalism <i>Piven and Cloward, excerpt from Poor People’s Movements</i> Franklin Roosevelt, “A Second Bill of Rights” in APT and at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwUL9tJmypl

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Monday, April 24	<p>Labor and New Deal Liberalism <i>Piven and Cloward, excerpt from Poor People's Movements</i> Franklin Roosevelt, "A Second Bill of Rights" in APT and at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwUL9tJmypl</p>
Wednesday, April 26	Film Screening: <i>Salt of the Earth</i>
Monday, May 1	Film Screening: <i>Salt of the Earth</i>
Wednesday, May 3	<p>Claiming Rights: Movements for Civil Rights and Civic Power Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Power of Nonviolence," in APT 1305 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in APT 1308 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I have a Dream," in APT 1317 (Screening in class) Malcom X "The Ballot or the Bullet" in APT 1322</p>
Monday, May 8	<p>Film Screening: <i>The Black Power Mixtape</i> Critical Essay Due at the beginning of class</p>
Wednesday, May 10	<p>Democracy and Power in the Modern Era C. Wright Mills, "The Power Elite," in <i>APT</i> 1264 Walter Lippmann, "Public Opinion" in <i>APT</i> 1058 Louis Hartz, "The Concept of a Liberal Society," in <i>APT</i> 1247 Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" (1938) in <i>APT</i> 985</p>
Monday, May 15	Course Conclusion

Final Exam Friday May, 19, 9:45 – 12:00