

American Political Thought

Instructor: Byengseon Bae

Course Description

This course examines political ideas that have emerged in the United States from the Founding. It will consider those ideas revealed in the debates concerning the American Founding, the American Civil War, Progressivism, and the Civil Rights Movement. It will also consider how the American government relates to the larger tradition of Western political thought.

Learning Objectives

This course is designed to enable you to:

- appreciate the principles, purposes, institutions, and mores that constitute American government
- understand the debate over the U.S. Constitution's creation and ratification
- understand the debate over slavery, secession, and popular sovereignty
- examine critiques and alternatives to America's founding political ideals
- improve our ability to read closely
- sharpen our ability to make good arguments

Required Books

Readings are available on canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance: I will expect you to attend all scheduled classes. If emergencies prevent you from attending, please let me know as soon as possible.

Grading

Participation	10%
Hypothes.is Comments	20%
Short Paper and Presentation	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

Participation (10%): Please read, take notes, and think about all assigned readings before class. I encourage participation in the form of questions and comments.

Hypothes.is Comments (20%): I will post assigned readings on Hypothes.is. Students are required to highlight sentences and have comments, including questions, on them.

Short Paper and Presentation (20%): Each week one seminar participant will be required to give a presentation on the material to be discussed during that meeting and submit a 7-10 page paper by the next class.

Midterm Exam (25%) and Final Exam (25%): You will be required to write your answers in response to the prompts I provide on the exam dates.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Introduction

Week 2. Culture and Religion

- The Mayflower Compact (1620)
- John Winthrop, A Model of Christian Charity (1630)
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840) Volume I, Part 1, Chapter 2.

Week 3. British Empire

- Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1793)
- Thomas Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" (1774).

Week 4. Revolution

- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
- Declaration of Independence (1776)
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690), Chapters 1-3, 8-9, 18-19.

Week 5. Montesquieu and Hume

- Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Books I-XI
- Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth"; "Of Commerce", *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1777)

Week 6. The Anti-Federalists

- The Federal Farmer 1 (1787)
- Brutus 1 (1787)
- Patrick Henry, Speech Before Virginia Ratifying Convention (1788)
- Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (1981)

Week 7. The Federalists

- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist* (1788) Nos. 1-2, 9-10, 14, 37, 39, 51, 85

Week 8. Midterm Exam

Week 9. Tocqueville's View of American Democracy

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840) Volume I, Introduction; Volume I, Part 2, Chapters 1-9.

Week 10. Abolitionists

- William Lloyd Garrison, Fourth of July Address (1829); Opening Statement of the First Issue of the Liberator (1831)
- Frederick Douglass, The Right to Criticize American Institutions (1847); The Constitution and Slavery (1849); What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (1852)

Week 11. Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas

- Abraham Lincoln, Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield (1838); Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois (1854); Speech on the Dred Scott Decision (1857); "House Divided" Speech (1858); First Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Ottawa (1858); Speech at Columbus, Ohio (1859)
- Stephen Douglas, Speech at Chicago (1858)

Week 12. President Abraham Lincoln

- Abraham Lincoln, Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois (1861); Speech at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1861); First Inaugural Address (1861); Proclamation Revoking General Hunter's Emancipation Order (1862); Address to Border-State Representatives for Compensated Emancipation (1862); Address on Colonization, (1862); Final Emancipation Proclamation (1863); Gettysburg Address (1863); Second Inaugural Address (1865); Speech on Reconstruction (1865)

Week 13. Progressivism

- *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings*, ed. Ronald J. Pestritto (2005), pp. 31-41, 61-65, 107-123, 175-190, 211-229.
- John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935)

Week 14. Leo Strauss and John Rawls

- Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Corrected and Expanded Edition, Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence* (2013), Chapters 1-2.
- John Rawls, *The Theory of Justice* (1999), Chapters 1-3.

Week 15. The Civil Rights Movement

- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963); “I Have a Dream.” (1963)

Week 16. Final Exam