

Hamilton College, Department of Government
Government 249 – Spring 2014
American Political Thought

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Class: WF 1–2:15pm, KJ201
Office Hours: TR 9–10:15am, WF 2:30–3:45p
and by appointment

Course introduction and goals

“The American experiment has constantly been reinterpreted, readjusted, renewed, and modernized by national and political leaders, by the courts, by new legislation, and new organizations created to handle new pressures and new problems. Without such accommodation to changing circumstances, any political system either becomes outworn or loses its meaning and significance for specific situations. A viable government must remain fluid and flexible *while still providing guidance and serving as a repository of accepted values.*” —Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans* (1967).

This course focuses on the broad themes that comprise a characteristically American ideology. It pays particular attention to the history of ideas about authority, work, and inclusion. The course progresses chronologically, starting with the colonial settlement, and ending with the feminist movement of the 1970s. The goals of the course are to improve our understanding of ideological complexity in American life, develop critical reading skills, and to appreciate rigorous conversation about ideas.

Required reading

Editions of the texts other than the ones listed below have different page numbering. If you purchase different printings, you will not be able to complete the reading assignments as listed on the syllabus.

All texts available at the Hamilton Bookstore. Please refer to ISBN numbers if purchasing from another source.

Perry Miller, *American Puritans* (Morningside) [978-0231054195]
Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (Yale) [978-0300101621]
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Princeton) [9780691096124]
Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Oxford) [978-0199552399]
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (Dover) [978-0486299747]
W.E.B. DuBois, *Darkwater* (Dover) [978-0486408903]
C. Wright Mills, *Power Elite* (Oxford) [978-0195133547]
Shulamith Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex* (FSG) [978-0374527877]

Requirements and expectations

Preparation and participation. I will provide basic historical, biographical, or interpretive background for each text, but class will be primarily conversation-based. I expect that you are prepared to discuss the assigned reading in an academic setting.¹ **The majority of your grade in this domain is determined by reading quizzes.** Reading quizzes are unannounced, but designed to be easy for students who have read. The typical quiz consists of three non-interpretive questions derived from the assigned reading.

Article summary. You must complete one two-page summary of an academic article about one of our selected texts. The purpose of the assignment is to deepen your understanding of a text (thinker, or period) that interests you, and also to improve your facility with academic writing.

Exams. All exam questions will be derived from my class notes. Midterm exams will be short-answer, emphasizing the themes and concepts discussed in class. The final exam will include a long-answer component that asks you to synthesize and evaluate one or more texts regarding a single theme or concept.

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Assignment	Percentage
<i>Participation and preparation</i>	25
<i>Article summary</i>	10
<i>Midterm exam 1</i>	20
<i>Midterm exam 2</i>	20
<i>Final exam</i>	25
Total	100

Class Conduct and Expectations

No makeup quizzes will be given without legitimate justification (e.g., verifiable medical illness). Documentation will be required in all cases and the instructor must be notified in advance. Students also are responsible for making computer backup files of all course work.

All students are expected to abide by the Hamilton College Honor Code. A copy of the honor code can be found at: <http://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code>.

Unless you have a documented disability that requires use of a laptop in class, all personal electronic devices must be silenced and put away while in class. If you are texting or using an electronic device without authorization during class, you will be marked as absent for the day (and any quiz grade for the day will be invalidated).

[Notice: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please be certain to discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) with appropriate documentation of your disability.]

¹That is, you have read the entire assignment before coming to class; you have arrived in class with your own copy of the assigned reading; you have writing materials for taking notes, and any supplementary papers or notes that will help you engage the material. I also expect that you are awake enough to participate.

Course Schedule

Wed, January 22 – Course introduction

From Colony to Nation

Fri, January 24 – Puritan authority
Miller, pp. 1–20, 78–84, 89–93.

Wed, January 29 – Challenges to Puritan authority
Miller, pp. 48–59, 93–108, 191–213.

Article summary: Joshua Miller, “Direct Democracy and the Puritan Theory of Membership.” *Journal of Politics* (Feb. 1991), pp. 57–74. <<http://bit.ly/1aorNjE>>

Fri, January 31 – Benjamin Franklin, an American original
Franklin, pp. 43–79 (middle).

Wed, February 5 – Franklin and the virtuous individual
Franklin, pp. 79–131, 141–160.

Article summary: Steven Forde, “Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography and the Education of America.” *The American Political Science Review* (Jun. 1992), pp. 357–368. <<http://bit.ly/K290pC>>

Fri, February 7 – The Founders and the scope of government
Hamilton, “Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank” (BB, 33pp).

Wed, February 12 – The character of the new nation
Hamilton, “Report on Manufactures” (BB, 25pp).

Article summary: Jeremy D. Bailey, “The New Unitary Executive and Democratic Theory: The Problem of Alexander Hamilton.” *The American Political Science Review* (Nov. 2008), pp. 453–465. <<http://bit.ly/1m4WKOM>>

Fri, February 14 – **First Midterm**
No reading.

The individual and industry in the Nineteenth Century

Wed, February 19 – Thoreau and the sovereignty of the individual
Thoreau, pp. 1–40.

Fri, February 21 – Nature and society
Thoreau, pp. 40–79, 140–154.

Wed, February 26 – Facing the dawn, awaiting Spring
Thoreau, pp. 81–99, 299–320.

Article summary: Ruth Lane, “Standing ‘Aloof’ from the State: Thoreau on Self-Government.” *The Review of Politics* (Spring 2005), pp. 283–310. <<http://bit.ly/1dQgTks>>

Fri, February 28 – Political economy of sex
Gilman, pp. 1–29.

Wed, March 5 – Marriage, work, and democracy
Gilman, pp. 30–72.

Fri, March 7 – Motherhood and society
Gilman, pp. 99–122, 146–156.

Article summary: Brian Lloyd, “Feminism, Utopian and Scientific: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Prison of the Familiar.” *American Studies* (Spring 1998), pp. 93–113. <<http://bit.ly/1j7haqu>>

Interlude: Ideology in America

Wed, March 12 – What do Americans believe?
Group activity; no reading.

Fri, March 14 – American ideology
Group activity; no reading.

The individual and industry in the Nineteenth Century, Revisited

Wed, April 2 – Slavery and the self-made man
Washington, pp. 1–36.

Fri, April 4 – Uplift, integration, and the race question
Washington, pp. 96–139.

Article summary: Donald B. Gibson, “Strategies and Revisions of Self-Representation in Booker T. Washington’s Autobiographies.” *American Quarterly* (Sep. 1993), pp. 370–393. <<http://bit.ly/1hqEZqm>>

Wed, April 9 – **Second midterm exam**
No reading.

The Long Twentieth Century

Fri, April 11 – DuBois and the Souls of White Folk
DuBois, chs. II–III.

Wed, April 16 – Work and service
DuBois, chs. IV–V.

Fri, April 18 – Democracy and women’s freedom
DuBois, ch. VI–VII.

Article summary: Lawrie Balfour, “Darkwater’s Democratic Vision.” *Political Theory* (Aug. 2010), pp. 537–563. <<http://bit.ly/1iUF9H1>>

Wed, April 23 – The emergence of mass society
Mills, pp. 3–46.

Fri, April 25 – Challenging pluralism

Mills, pp. 242–297.

Wed, April 30 – Mass society and the higher immorality

Mills, pp. 298–324, 343–361.

Article summary: Jay A. Sigler, “The Political Philosophy of C. Wright Mills.” *Science & Society* (Winter 1966), pp. 32–49. <<http://bit.ly/1fy22SA>>

Fri, May 2 – Twentieth-century feminism

Firestone, pp. 3–37.

Wed, May 7 – Love, romance, and revolution

Firestone, pp. 113–139.

Fri, May 9 – Utopian visions, revolutionary plans

Firestone, pp. 17–216.

Article Summary: Anne Enke, “Smuggling Sex through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism.” *American Quarterly* (Dec. 2003), pp. 635–667. <<http://bit.ly/1d6A5cI>>

Sat, May 17, 7pm – Final Exam.

Appendix A: Article Summary assignment

You will be responsible for writing a 2–3 page summary of one of articles listed on the syllabus course schedule. The date on which it is listed is its due date. Your summary should do the following:

1. Paraphrase the author's main argument. What is the article's central claim? (1 paragraph)
2. Discuss what type of evidence the author uses, and evaluate its efficacy. Is the evidence appropriate to the argument? (1 paragraph)
3. Using textual citations from the article, summarize the main points of the argument. (1–2 paragraph)
4. Discuss any subsidiary claims that you found compelling. (1 paragraph)