AMST 100 Jeffrey L. Sedgwick

The American Experiment Fall 2014

***Review Questions for Final Examination***

The final examination for this course is scheduled for 11:00am - 1:30pm on Saturday, December 13th in Luter 170. It will consist of two of the following six questions chosen at random the day of the final. This is a closed book examination; you may use neither books nor notes during the exam period.

1. The Founding period in American history is particularly important because of the depth of debate over fundamentals that guide and inform the American regime. The debate between the Federalists, on the one hand, and the Anti-Federalists, on the other, centered on the issues of national unity versus state sovereignty, the Great American republic versus the small, self-governing community, commerce versus civic virtue, and private gain versus public good. Outline the pros and cons of these four issues and explain why the Anti-Federalists ultimately lost the debate. What was the critical weakness of the Anti-Federalist position?
2. It perhaps comes as no surprise that a part of the American experiment in the New World is the emergence of a New Man, quite strikingly different from his ancestors in what Donald Rumsfeld once dismissingly referred to as “the Old Europe.” Using Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Carnegie as your sources, discuss the American character that defines this New Man. What are his attributes? Which are strengths? Which are weaknesses?
3. Several times during this course, we have encountered the idea of "greatness" in politics. In this view, politics becomes a means toward glory as opposed to the mere pursuit of material self-interest. In a democratic society, is the pursuit of greatness a virtue or a vice? What particular dangers accompany the pursuit of individual greatness or glory? How are these dangers best defended against?
4. There have been numerous attempts in the history of the American experiment to steer a path between material self-interest and moral righteousness. In Abraham Lincoln's speeches and addresses, he proposes either patriotism or civic friendship. In Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, he suggests “self-interest rightly understood.” First, define the pitfalls of self-interested materialism and moral righteousness; then, compare and contrast patriotism, civic friendship and self-interest rightly understood as means to avoid these pitfalls.
5. In this course, we have discussed the development and evolution of the American experiment; one recurring issue is the relationship of law (or government based on consent) to morality (grounded in religious principle or natural law). Compare and contrast the views of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Abraham Lincoln on the issue of civil disobedience and the relationship between law and morality.
6. In this course, we have discussed the evolution of the American experiment as it pertains to how a group of disparate individuals are made into a community possessed of a common good and a sense of fraternity. Consider the journey from the “one people” of the Declaration of Independence and the “We, the People” of the Constitution to the struggles of Blacks and Women to achieve equal membership in this community. What attributes of their struggles led to success? What attributes led to opposition or backlash? In what ways were the two struggles similar and in what ways did they differ? What does their story tell us about the process and prospects of social change?