

San José State University
Department of Political Science
POLS 163, American Political Thought, Spring 2020

Instructor:	Dr. Sara M. Benson
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Office Hours:	Monday/Wednesday 10:30-11:45
Class Days/Time:	Monday and Wednesday 12:00 – 1:15
Classroom:	DMH 160

Course Description

This course engages 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 political membership as they emerged from republican, utilitarian, Puritan, and liberal ideas about states, citizens, and rights in American society. We examine the origins and even contradictions of American political thought and its development over time.

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.

Required Texts/Readings

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

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

CLO 1 Explain the origins and development of American Political Thought over time.

CLO 2 Critically engage key texts in American Political Thought through summary and analysis.

CLO 3 Apply an understanding of key concepts and ideas from American Political Thought to contemporary political issues.

Department Learning Outcomes

The Department of Political Science has the following goals in mind for this course:

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

Application and Disciplinary Methods Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

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.

Grading Policy

No late papers will be accepted.

Grading Scale

97 to 100	A plus
93 to 96	A
90 to 92	A minus
87 to 89	B plus
83 to 86	B
80 to 82	B minus
77 to 79	C plus
73 to 76	C
70 to 72	C minus
63 to 69	D
60 to 62	D minus
less than 60	F

University Policies

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 (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

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.

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. 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. Late arrivals are inappropriate. If you absolutely must enter late, please be prepared to enter quietly and without disruption. Please be respectful of your colleagues during class discussions and exams.

Political Science Departmental Writing Policy and SJSU Writing Center

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm.

For assistance with writing, please see me or visit the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

Course Requirements, Assignments, Grading Policy

Assignment One: Midterm	25% of course grade
Assignment Two: Quizzes	30% of course grade
Assignment Three: Critical Essays	20% of course grade
Assignment Four: Final Exam	25% of course grade

Assignment One: Midterm (CLO 1 and 3)

The midterm will be comprised of quotes and concepts from the course. 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 Essays (CLOs 1 and 3)

Students will write 2 critical essays this semester. As part of a workshop, students will choose or adapt a discussion question from the syllabus and craft a **2-page** engaged response to the material. You should not use outside sources. The essay should represent your own original analysis of the text. 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.

Course Schedule

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Monday, January 27	Course Opening: Introduction to American Political Thought
Wednesday, January 29	<p>Founding Documents: Screening: <i>Words That Built America</i> https://www.hbo.com/documentaries/the-words-that-built-america</p> <p>Reading: <i>Declaration of Independence</i> (1776) <i>The Constitution of the United States</i> (1787) *These can be read online or in <i>American Political Thought</i> (hereafter noted as <i>APT</i>)</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. How do people with diverse ideological viewpoints make claims to the documents?
Monday, February 3	<p>Federalism and Confederation <i>The Bill of Rights</i> (1791) <i>The Articles of Confederation</i> (1778) Cornplanter, Half Town, and Big Tree "The Land We Live on Our Fathers Received From God" (1790) (Canvas) "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>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What important differences do you see in the Constitution and Articles of Confederation? 2. What are the most important key concepts in federalism as an organizing framework? 3. What is a confederation and why were the Articles abandoned? 4. What tensions can you identify in these documents with regard to positive and negative liberties? 5. Where does the idea of a confederation come from? How did Six Nations peoples describe their own political organization and the nature of the US government?
Wednesday, February 5	<p>The Social Gospel: Puritan Political Thought</p> <p>Reading: "Colonial Roots," pgs. 2-8 (<i>APT</i>) John Winthrop, "Model of Christian Charity" (1630) in <i>APT</i> 11-16 William Penn, "Preface to the First Frame of Government for Pennsylvania," (1682) in <i>APT</i> 63-65. Benjamin Franklin, "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America," (1784) in <i>APT</i> 55-61</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Winthrop's vision of social order?

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What is a Christian commonwealth? What makes it Christian? 3. What is the purpose of law according to Penn? 4. How does Franklin describe America and its morals?
Monday, February 10	<p>The Social Contract: Lockean Political Thought</p> <p>Reading: John Locke, Excerpt from Second Treatise of Government (1689) (Canvas)</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is natural law and how does it organize the relationship between law and politics? 2. What is John Locke’s idea of the social contract? How do you see those ideas represented in the founding documents? 3. What is republicanism? 4. How does Locke understand property and ownership?
Wednesday, February 12	<p>The Meaning of the Founding in American Political Thought</p> <p>Reading: Samuel Adams, “The Rights of the Colonists” (1772) in <i>APT</i> 77-82 Jonathan Boucher, “On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance” (1774) in <i>APT</i> 82-87</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you compare and contrast natural law and republicanism with utilitarianism and the social contract tradition? 2. In what specific passages do these texts describe a kind of social contract? 3. What evidence of utilitarianism do you find in Adams? What are the key characteristics of his ideas?
Monday, February 17	<p>The Political Thought of John Adams</p> <p>John Adams, “Thoughts on Government” (1776) in <i>APT</i> 88-94 Critical Essay Workshop</p>
Wednesday, February 19	<p>*Critical Essay Due</p>
Monday, February 24	<p>The Political Thought of John Adams</p> <p>Screening: <i>John Adams: Episode 2</i>, “Independence”</p>
Wednesday, February 26	<p>The Antifederalists and the Opponents of the U.S. Constitution</p> <p>Reading: Richard Henry Lee, “Letters from a Federal Farmer” (Letter I) in <i>APT</i> 214 Patrick Henry, “Debate in the Virginia Ratifying Convention” in <i>APT</i> 232 <i>The Bill of Rights</i> in <i>APT</i> 240</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.

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Monday, March 2	<p>Federalism: Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, and <i>The Papers</i> Reading: <i>Federalist Papers</i> 1,10 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's view of proper constitutional governance? 4. Was Madison interested in controlling government or the masses?
Wednesday, March 4	<p>Federalism Continued: Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, and <i>The Papers</i> Part II</p>
Monday, March 9	<p>The American Dream: <i>Democracy in America</i> Reading: Excerpt from <i>Democracy in America</i> (Canvas)</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why does Tocqueville fear the crowd? 2. Which features of American political culture does Tocqueville find most interesting? 3. How does power work in America?
Wednesday, March 11	<p>The American Nightmare: Slavery and Democracy David Walker, "Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829) <i>APT</i> 495 Frederick Douglass "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852) <i>APT</i> 506 Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849) in <i>APT</i> 409 Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Rights (1848) in <i>APT</i> 446</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. What connections can you make between the anti-federalist tradition and the later writings of Thoreau? What narrative strategies does he use to argue for limited government and the end of slavery? 3. What is the narrative strategy of the Seneca Falls Declaration?
Monday, March 16	<p>Rights, Remedies, and the Struggle for Justice Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Power of Nonviolence," in <i>APT</i> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in <i>APT</i> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I have a Dream," in <i>APT</i> (Screening in class) Malcom X "The Ballot or the Bullet" in <i>APT</i></p>
Wednesday, March 18	<p>Critical Essay Workshop</p>
Monday, March 23	<p>Exam Review *Critical Essay Due</p>

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Wednesday, March 25	Midterm Exam
Monday, March 30	Spring Break.
Wednesday, April 1	Spring Break.
Monday, April 6	Power in American Politics Excerpt from John Gaventa, <i>Power and Powerlessness</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does Gaventa refer to as the three faces of power? What are their distinguishing characteristics? 2. Is there a 4th face of power?
Wednesday, April 8	Power in American Politics Continued Excerpt from John Gaventa, <i>Power and Powerlessness</i>
Monday, April 13	<i>Film Screening</i>
Wednesday, April 15	The Meaning of Equality in American Political Thought Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth,” in APT Henry Demarest Lloyd, “Wealth Against Commonwealth,” in APT
Monday, April 20	Individuality and American Political Thought Film Screening: <i>The Crowd</i> (1928)
Wednesday, April 22	Labor and American Political Thought <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=UwUL9tJmypi
Monday, April 27	Labor and American Political Thought <i>Piven and Cloward, excerpt from Poor People’s Movements</i> (Canvas)
Wednesday, April 29	Social Movements and American Political Thought Film Screening: <i>Salt of the Earth</i>
Monday, May 4	Film Screening: <i>Salt of the Earth</i>
Wednesday, May 6	Democracy and Power in the Modern Era Chela Sandoval, Excerpt from <i>Methodology of the Oppressed</i> (Canvas)
Monday, May 11	Course Conclusion and Exam Review

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