

American Political Thought

Prof. Susan Cohen
1325 Social Science Tower; 625-5504
scohen@polisci.umn.edu or
src@alpha-d-d.com

University of Minnesota
Political Science 3225
Fall 2000

This course explores American political thought beginning with the Independence. Our primary focus will be on the Founders and on the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, who traveled through America in the 1830s. Questions: What was the Founders' conception of human nature and how did they established reflect this conception? Was their understanding of one? Did they establish a just and viable political system? In what threatened American political life? How can it be combatted, if indeed and widespread religious convictions necessary to the perpetuation of

Careful reading of texts and active participation in class discussion

Readings:

The following required texts are available at the bookstore:

Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic*
Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay,
The Federalist Papers (ed. Clinton Rossiter)
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (abridged)
Sanford Kessler, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion:*
American Christianity and the Prospects for Freedom
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*

Additional readings will be on reserve at Wilson Library.

Course requirements:

Paper on Berns and McConnell articles (20 5 pp.), due Sept. 28	
Take-home midterm handed out Oct. 26, due Nov. 2	35%
Final exam Take-home part handed out Dec. 7, due Dec. 21 In-class part Dec. 21, 6:20	45%

Papers and take-home exams are due at the *beginning* of class. Late papers will be accepted at the end of the semester if your grade is near the borderline, by your participation in class discussion or the lack thereof. In the class, discussion will play an important role in our learning in small groups. *In order to facilitate small group discussion, three discussion questions to each class.* Again, all students are expected to do the reading, and to come to class prepared to take an active part

Office Hours:

Feel free to come see me in my office should you have any questions about the course, or if you just want to pursue a topic we've touched on in our readings. We can easily set up an appointment if you can't make it. Office hours will be announced shortly.

American Political Thought

Sept. 7

Introduction

Sept. 14

Declaration of Independence (handout)
The Constitution of the United States of America
(in *The Federalist Papers*)
Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic*, pp. 1-89

Sept. 21

Zuckert, pp. 92-201

Sept. 28 SHORT PAPER ON BERNS & MCCONNELL DUE

Zuckert, pp. 202-243
Walter Berns, "Religion and the Founding Principle"
(reserve)
in *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic*, ed. 1
Michael W. McConnell, "Free Exercise As the Framers Understood It
in *The Bill of Rights: Original Meaning and Current Unde*
Eugene W. Hickok, Jr.

Oct. 5

Martin Diamond, "The American Idea of Man: The View from the Foun
in *The Americans: 1776*, ed. Irving Kristol and Paul Wea
Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay,
The Federalist Papers
Introduction by Clinton Rossiter, and Papers 1,2,6,9,10

Oct. 12

Martin Diamond, "The American Idea of Equality: The View from the
in *As Far as Republican Principles Will Admit: Essays by*
ed. William A. Schambra

Michael Parenti, "The Constitution as an Elitist Document"
(reserve)

in *How Democratic Is the Constitution?*, ed. Robert A. G.
A. Schambra

Wilson Carey McWilliams, "On Equality as the Moral Foundation for
in *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic*, ed. 1

Oct. 19

The Federalist Papers, Papers 14-17, 23, 37, 39, 47-49, 51, 62, 6

Oct. ~~26~~ TAKE-HOME MIDTERM HANDED OUT

The Federalist Papers, Papers 70-72, 78, 84

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (abridged)

Heffner introduction (pp. 9-13 only), Author's Introduction, Part

Nov. ~~26~~ TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE

Tocqueville, Part Two: Book I, Chs. 16-18, 25; Book II (entire);
46, 48

Tocqueville, "How Americans Combat Individualism by the Doctrine
Understood" (reserve)

in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P.
Part II, Ch. 8)

Nov. 9

Tocqueville, Part Two, Book IV (entire)

Sanford Kessler, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion: American Christian
Freedom*,

Preface, Chs. 1-4

Nov. 16

Kessler, Chs. 5-9

Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS

Nov. 30

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (entire)

Dec. TAKE-HOME PART OF FINAL HANDED OUT

Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (reserve)
in *The Portable Thoreau*, ed. Carl Bode

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (rese
in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Marti.*
ed. James Melvin Washington

Thurs. Dec. 21, 6:20 ~~FINAL~~ EXAM

TAKE-HOME PART OF FINAL DUE
IN-CLASS PART OF FINAL HELD