

The American Constitutional Order: Conflicting Political Visions

This seminar provides an overview of the constitutional and political development of the United States from the nation's origin to today. The framers of the U.S. Constitution agreed on many important innovations in governance, but the Constitution was also a compromise among powerful groups with very different views on economics, on slavery, on federalism, on governmental powers and purposes, and other topics. American constitutional development has since continued to be shaped by competing political visions, advanced by major parties and by social movements, about what the Constitution's basic goals and principles are, what policies are appropriate, and in what ways the Constitution should be preserved or amended.

The seminar will also provided an immersion experience in American political and academic culture. Professor Smith will lecture at the start of each session to provide context and introduce the issues, but students will then discuss the content and persuasiveness of competing American constitutional visions. Students should do the assigned readings in advance and e-mail Professor Smith a short, one or two paragraph reading response the evening before each day's sessions. On the first day and as we proceed, students should feel free to suggest changes in the syllabus to make it more responsive to their interests and needs. We will meet twice a day, except for July 29th, when we will meet once, as Professor Smith will participate in a special symposium that day. Grades will be based on reading responses, class discussion, and a paper of roughly 15 double-spaced pages due September 10th.

All required readings can be found in Isaac Kramnick and Theodore J. Lowi, American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology, except for some readings for the last day that will be provided separately.

July 28th: The Colonial and Founding Eras

i). From God's English Subjects to American Citizens

Required: John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," 11-16.

Jonathan Mayhew, "Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission," 43-52.

Thomas Paine, "Common Sense," 131-148.

ii). From the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution

Required: The Declaration of Independence, 151-154.

The Federalist Papers, 191-243.

Patrick Henry, "Debate in Virginia Ratifying Convention," 266-274.

Recommended Reading: Kramnick and Lowi, xxv-xxxix, 1-9.

R. Smith, Civic Ideals, 13-86, 115-136.

July 29: The Birth of Parties: Hamiltonian Federalist v. Jeffersonian Republicans

Required: Alexander Hamilton, "First Report on Public Credit; Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank; Report on Manufactures," 297-319.
Thomas Jefferson, "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom; Notes on the State of Virginia; Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank," 337-352 AND 546-554.

Recommended: R. Smith, Civic Ideals, 137-196.

July 30: The Age of Jackson and the Civil War

i). Jackson and the White Democratic Republic

Required: Andrew Jackson, "Bank Veto Message; Farewell Address," 427-443.
Daniel Webster, "Speech on Jackson's Veto," 443-447.
Roger Taney, "Charles River Bridge Case; Dred Scott v. Sanford," 447-451, 644-647.
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self Reliance," 471-476.

ii). The Civil War and New Births of Freedom

Required: Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" 594-598.
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments; Address to the New York State Legislature," 529-535.
Abraham Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision; New Haven Address; Addresses to Congress; Gettysburg Address; Second Inaugural Address," 654-660, 667-668, 676-685.

Recommended: R. Smith, Civic Ideals, 197-346.

August 2: Late 19th Century Inegalitarian and Egalitarian Visions

i). The Rejection of Racial and Economic Equality

Required: William G. Sumner, "What the Social Classes Owe Each Other," 703-719.
Josiah Strong, "Our Country," 901-907.
Henry Cabot Lodge, "Speech on a Literacy Test," 910-915.
Plessy v. Ferguson, 942-946.
Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address," 946-950.

ii). Populist, Socialist, and Racial Egalitarian Reformers

Required: Lester Ward, "Sociocracy," 773-779.
"National People's Party Platform," 801-806.
William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold Speech," 809-815.
Eugene Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," 834-840.
W. E. B. Du Bois, "Souls of Black Folks," 950-963.

Recommended: Smith, Civic Ideals, 347-409.

August 3: The Progressive and New Deal Eras

i) The Progressive Reformers: Contrasting Social and Political Visions

Required: John Ryan, "A Living Wage," 1001-1002.
Jane Addams, "The Spirit of Youth," 1002-1007.
Herbert Croly, "The Promise of American Life," 1065-1086.
Woodrow Wilson, "The New Freedom," 1102-1113.

ii). The Battle over the New Deal

Required: H. Hoover, "Rugged Individualism; Challenge to Liberty," 1137-1144.
John Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action," 1156-1164.
Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Speech at Oglethorpe University;
Commonwealth Club Speech; The Four Freedoms; A Second
Bill of Rights," 1164-1179; 1187-1191.

Recommended: Theodore J. Lowi, The End of Liberalism, 2d. ed., xi-63.

August 4: From the Civil Rights Era to the Reagan Revolution

i). The Cold War, Civil Rights, and the Great Society

Required: George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 1217-1222.
Daniel Bell, "The End of Ideology," 1277-1280.
SDS, "Port Huron Statement," 1290-1301.
Martin Luther King, Jr., "I have a Dream," 1317-1321.
Malcolm X, "The Ballot of the Bullet," 1322-1328.
National Organization of Women, "Bill of Rights," 1350-51.

ii). The Rise of the New Right

Required: Barry Goldwater, "The Conscience of a Conservative," 1256-1263.
Phyllis Schlafly, "The Power of the Positive Woman," 1406-1411,
Milton and Rose Friedman, "Free to Choose," 1411-1426.
Pat Robertson, "A Portrait of America," 1464-1471.

Recommended: Lowi, The End of Liberalism, 67-294,

August 5: American Philosophy and Politics in the Age of Obama

i). Currents in Contemporary American Political Philosophy

Required: John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice," 1370-1381.
Allan Bloom, "The Closing of the American Mind," 1438-1449.
Richard Rorty, "A Cultural Left," 1494-1503.
Bill McKibben, "The End of Nature," 1503-1511.

ii). The Democratic Pragmatism of Barack Obama

Required: Barack Obama, The Audacity of Hope, 71-100 ("Our Constitution"),
227-269 ("Race").
Barack Obama, "National Constitution Center Speech"

Recommended: Theodore J. Lowi, The End of the Republican Era.

August 6: Concluding Reflections and Research Presentations