

POLS 4370 – AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT AND THE FOUNDERS' CONSTITUTION

Thursdays: 4:00pm or TBA

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rebecca Reid
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OFFICE: 307 Benedict Hall
OFFICE HOURS: MW 10:30 am-1:00 pm and 3:00-5:00 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides advanced undergraduate students a survey of the historical, political, legal, and theoretical debates leading to the generation of the American Constitution. The class focuses on historical documents, political theory, legal texts, and political literature of early America so as to understand the socio-political and historical context of the constitutional ratification as well as original meanings and intentions. This class is reading intensive and formatted as a seminar to enable students to explore and analyze class themes through discussion and dialogue. Students will be expected to write an original research paper in addition to several short papers evaluating and synthesizing the readings for selected weeks.

UTEP EDGE

This course encompasses activities associated with UTEP EDGE, including 1) communication through class discussion and weekly papers, 2) global awareness by placing American history in context as well as prominent legal and political doctrines of the time, and 3) problem-solving and critical thinking through the paper assignments as well as the final research paper.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester students will have:

- An understanding of the key elements of American political thought, history, and legal doctrine.
- Developed critical and analytical thinking skills necessary to adapt and apply theoretical arguments to specific institutional and environmental contexts, as well as evaluate how these arguments evolve as these contexts shift.
- Demonstrated the ability to synthesize and evaluate specific arguments into cogent arguments and explanations.
- Prepared a conference level, original research paper related to constitutional law and theory.

REQUIRED READING

- Hall, Kermit F., Paul Finkelman, James W. Ely. 2017. *American Legal History: Cases and Materials*. 5th Edition. Oxford University Press.
- Rakove, Jack N. 1997. *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. Vintage.
- Wootton, David. 2008. *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche*. 2nd edition. Hackett Publishing Co.
- Hammond, Scott J., and Kevin R. Hardwick. 2007. *Classics of American Political and Constitutional Thought, Volume 1: Origins Through the Civil War*. Hackett Publishing Co.
- West, Thomas G. 2017. *The Political Theory of the American Founding: Natural Rights, Public Policy, and the Moral Conditions of Freedom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bailyn, Bernard. 2017. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Belknap/Harvard University Press.
- *Federalist Papers*

Students are required to locate and read each article and book. Required articles and other readings can be accessed from the UTEP library (which includes JSTOR, Sage, or Heinonline (among other sources). Access is free on UTEP campus or at home via proxy. Occasionally, Google Scholar and author websites may similarly provide access to these articles. In no situation is a student expected to or required to purchase an article.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation in this course will be based on the following components:

Critical Evaluation Papers (5)	50%
Research Paper	50%

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

Participation: Attendance and participation are essential. Students are responsible for offering their thoughts, opinions, and questions without solicitation from the instructor. Needless to say, these thoughts should have merit and be based upon the readings.

Critical Evaluations: Each week for the five selected weeks*, students are responsible to turn in a critical evaluation essay that must critique the readings due that week. These papers should address the strengths and weaknesses of the readings, discuss common and disparate themes, how the scholarship is advanced (or not) by these readings, the limitations of the readings, how the research can be improved, etc. **This is not a summary of the readings.** Rather, the essay is an assessment of the readings, addressing the theoretical and methodological issues. These papers should be **3-5 pages long, typed, and are due at 5 pm Wednesdays** (the day before class each week). References and citations are mandatory, and the works cited pages do not count toward the page limitations.

*Students will select 5 weeks for which they will write these critical evaluation papers. Hence, there will be a total of 5 papers due for each student. Students are responsible for successfully completing and submitting each paper and staying on schedule. **Students are under no circumstances able to make up these papers, and I do not accept late work.**

Research paper: Students must complete an original research paper that offers conference-level work. Early in the semester, each student must submit a 1-2 page research proposal that includes a detailed research question(s). The goal of the research paper is to explore a topic in American constitutional thought and interpretation beyond that covered in assigned readings and class discussion. All topics must be approved by me; hence, I recommend brainstorming research ideas early in the semester as it is rare to find a viable idea on the first try.

The final research paper is **due the last day of class** and should be approximately **10-25 pages long. Students must submit their paper in hard copy format during class.** Students are encouraged to meet with me periodically throughout the semester for feedback and discuss their progress. **I will not give incompletes for the class (except in the gravest of circumstances) and late papers will not be accepted.**

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. *CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.*

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students and the homepage of The Dean of Students at www.utep.edu/dos, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You will be held responsible for all material covered in the textbooks, articles, and the class discussions. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the content of that day's information. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior. Additionally, I expect all students to attend class prepared and to show up on time. It is disrespectful to the instructor and the other students when individuals show up late or are not prepared to participate in the class discussion. I allow the use of laptops for class purposes only; however, should laptop usage become disruptive, I reserve the right to prohibit laptops and other electronic devices.

This class is designed to challenge students with new, sometimes controversial, ideas and arguments. This class is designed to be a safe, open environment to express ideas, arguments, and opinions for learning purposes. This class is designed to initiate an open discussion based upon the required readings, encourage critical thinking and application to current events, and enable students to digest difficult material through these discussions. This class does not give you knowledge—i.e. knowledge and understanding is not transfused to students by simply sitting in class. Learning is an interactive process and is the primary responsibility of each student.

Late assignments will receive no credit.

All grades are earned and reflect your reflect the mastery of material through the adequate completion of assignments by their deadline. As such, they do not reflect level of effort, interest, or intention. **I will not change final grades for the course under any circumstances**, with the single exception of cases where an error occurred in my calculations. As general policy, I do not offer incompletes for this course. Finally, no assignments or materials are accepted after the last day of class or its scheduled due date.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a list of topics to be covered at each class meeting, and the readings, which should be completed in order to fully participate in class that day. I *require* you to read the material prior to the class since you will be expected to participate in the discussion. While I give specific days/weeks on which certain topics will be discussed, the calendar is subject to change. Any alterations to the course schedule will be clearly announced. As a general rule, the course will follow this order of topics, regardless of date changes, unless otherwise announced.

WEEK 1: MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Reading due: Wootton (2008): Ch 2 (p 89- 277) and Ch 3 (p 278- 362)

WEEK 2: MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Reading due: Wootton (2008): Ch 4 (p 363- 525) and Ch 5 (p 526- 569)

WEEK 3: MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Reading due: Wootton (2008): Ch 6 (p 570- 652)

WEEK 4: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT TO THE REVOLUTION

Reading due: Hammond and Hardwick (2007): Ch 1-2

WEEK 5: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT TO THE REVOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Reading due: Hall et al. (2017): Ch 1

WEEK 6: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT AT A TIME OF REVOLUTION

Reading due: Hammond and Hardwick (2007): Ch 3
Bailyn (2017)

WEEK 7: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT AT A TIME OF REVOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Reading due: Hall et al. (2017): Ch 2
Bailyn (2017)

WEEK 8: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT UNDER THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Reading due: Hammond and Hardwick (2007): Ch 4
Hall et al. (2017): Ch 2

WEEK 9: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT UNDER THE CONSTITUTION

Reading due: Hall et al. (2017): Ch 2
Rakove (1997)

WEEK 10: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT DURING RATIFICATION

Reading due: Hammond and Hardwick (2007): Ch 5-6

WEEK 11: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT DURING RATIFICATION (CONTINUED)

Reading due: *FEDERALIST PAPERS*

WEEK 12: ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Reading due: West (2017)

WEEK 13: ALTERNATIVE VIEWS (CONTINUED)

Reading due: West (2017)

Research paper due (April 26th or May 3rd)