

American Political Thought

POLS 212, Buckman 325
TTh: 9:30-10:45 & 12:30-1:45

Professor Rafael Major
Buckman 209, x3526
Office Hours: MWF 11-1, TTh 11-12 and by appointment.

Required Texts

Federalist Papers, Publius (Kessler, Rossiter) – no other edition.

Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville (Mansfield, Chicago) – no other edition.

The Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin (Yale, Nota Bene) – no other edition.

Selected Speeches and Writings, Abraham Lincoln (Vintage Press) – no other edition.

Several Hand-Outs will be given throughout the term. These will usually be of shorter length, but are very important for class discussion and are required reading.

Purpose and Objectives of the Course

The purpose of a course on American Political Thought should be obvious. As American citizens, as mothers and fathers, and as teachers we must be acquainted with the “political philosophy” that lies behind our regime. Anyone who lives in the United States should know the “thinking” of our founding fathers in order to better understand our current situation (for better or for worse).

This obvious purpose, however, is easier stated than accomplished. There is a deeper purpose for our studies this term. This deeper purpose is that of self discovery. As citizens of the modern world, all of us have been shaped or *educated* by the founding of the United States of America and this education has been so thorough that we no longer recognize some fundamental assumptions that guide our everyday lives.

Luckily for us, the obvious purpose of understanding America and the deeper purpose of understanding ourselves go hand in hand. We will read some foundational documents of the American founding for ourselves. We **will not** assume that we understand Jefferson, Madison, Washington or any other

founder simply because we took a High School or Junior High Civics course. We **will not** assume we already know what it means to be an American because most of us were lucky enough to be born here. We **will not** assume we have some privileged point of criticism because we know the personal failings of any founder. In essence, we **will not** assume anything ... we will read for ourselves and judge for ourselves.

A crucial aspect of this course will be to sharpen our reading skills. If we are to understand these men, we must have faith that they expressed their thought in a meaningful way. Coming to know an author through reading can be as exciting as getting to know a good friend. In this sense, a book is more than ink and paper, it is a gift left by the greatest minds in order to school future generations (you) – about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Written Questions

During selected classes – usually as we begin a new section – you will be required to hand in 2-3 **typed** questions regarding the days reading assignments. (Yes, these questions must be typed.)

Grading:

In-class and Written Questions 15%

First Paper: 10%

Second Paper: 15%

Third Paper: 20%

Fourth Paper: 25%

Final Exam: 15%

Failure to turn in any of the four papers will result in failure of the course.

Other Requirements:

Attendance is required and you are expected to attend all class meetings having read the assigned texts carefully and prepared to discuss them. The core of the course will be our careful examination and discussion of the texts in class. As much as possible this course will be run as a seminar, so that the more you prepare and the better you know the texts, the more you will get out of it. Your thoughtful participation (questions, comments, and objections) is required. A record of unexcused absences will reduce your final grade (e.g., from an A to an F) at the instructor's discretion.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own work. You will, at the end of all written work, **affirm your adherence to the principles and terms of Rhodes College's honor code**. You are responsible for reading and understanding that code. *Ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse*. If you are ever unsure of its meaning and any particular application, contact either me or the writing center.

You are, in this course, allowed to discuss the paper topics *with other members of this class*. But such discussions must be limited to the substance of the question and the relevant readings. *They must not extend into the outlining, writing, and rewriting of the essays*.

Reading Schedule

(Subject to Change)

Day	Date	comment
Thursday	August 24	First day of class
Tuesday	29-31	Mayflower Compact; John Winthrop A Model of Christian Charity; Tocqueville, <i>Democracy</i> , Author's Introduction pg.3-15, Chapter 2 pg. 27-45
TTH	September 5-7	Locke & Montesquieu (Handouts) First Paper Due
TTH	12-14	<i>Declaration of Independence</i> (with Constitution of the United States of America), <i>Centinal 1</i> (Handout), <i>Brutus 1</i> (Handout)
TTH	19-21	<i>Federalist Papers</i> , Preface and #1,6,9,10
TTH	26-28	<i>Federalist Papers</i> , 37, 39, 47,51
TTH	October 3-5	<i>Federalist Papers</i> , 53-54, 62-3, 68,72 Second Paper Due
TTH	10-12	Tocqueville <i>Democracy</i> , Vol. I, Part 1, Chaps. 4,5,8
Thursday	12	Fall break begins Friday Oct 13 at 5:00 p.m.:
Tuesday	17	Fall break
Thursday	19	Tocqueville <i>Democracy</i> , Vol. I, Part 2 Chaps. 5,7-8
TTH	24-26	Tocqueville <i>Democracy</i> , Vol. II Part 1 Chap 1-2,3; Part 2 Chap. 4-5,8-10, 13
Tuesday	31	Third Paper Due
Thursday	November 2	Franklin <i>Autobiography</i>
TTH	7-9	Franklin <i>Autobiography</i>
TTH	14-16	Franklin <i>Autobiography</i>
Tuesday	21	Thanksgiving Recess begins at 10:00 pm Fourth Paper Due
Thursday	23	Thanksgiving Break
TTH	28-30	Lincoln TBD
Tuesday	December 5	Last day of class: Lincoln TBD
Fri-Wed	8-13	Final Exams

Important Dates

Day	Date	Event
Tuesday	August 22	Enrollment Clearance/Registration
Wednesday	23	Classes begin Opening Convocation
Tuesday	29	Drop/add period ends
Wednesday	30	Extended drop period begins
Monday	September 4	Labor Day Holiday
Wednesday	13	Extended Drop Period Ends Pass/Fail Option Ends
Thursday	14	Withdraw Period begins
Wednesday	20	Last day to remove conditional grades
Friday	October 13	Fall recess begins at 5:00 p.m.
Monday	16	Mid-term grades due to Registrar, 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday	18	Classes resume at 8:00 a.m.
Friday	27	Withdraw Period Ends
Tuesday	November 21	Thanksgiving Recess begins at 10:00 p.m.
Monday	27	Classes resume 8:00 a.m.
Wednesday	December 6	Last day of classes
Thursday	7	Reading day
Fri-Wed	8-13	Examinations
Friday	15	Final grades due to registrar's office 5:00 p.m.