

HIST 255 Conservatism in the United States  
Saxe - Section #12352, Buckman 330, 9-9:50 MWF  
E-mail: [saxer@rhodes.edu](mailto:saxer@rhodes.edu); Phone – 843-3249  
Office Hours – MF, 10-11 or by appointment, 207 Buckman

This course will provide an introduction to developments in conservative thought and politics in the 20th Century. Students will learn about the roots of American conservatism in the first part of the century and learn how conservatives critiqued the creation of the New Deal, the rise of Stalinist Russia and the threat of communism, and the outbreak of World War II. In studying the postwar era, the class will discuss conflicts between traditionalists and libertarians, Eisenhower's "modern Republicanism," conservatives and the Cold War, the campaign of Barry Goldwater, and the conservative response to the civil rights movement, Vietnam and "free love." Finally, the class will consider the Reagan revolution and its impact on the current state of conservative politics in the United States and suggest directions for conservatism in the 21st Century.

**Required Texts:**

Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race and the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1992*  
John Ehrman and Michael W. Flamm, *Debating the Reagan Presidency*  
Gregory L. Schneider, *Conservatism in America since 1930*

**Course Requirements:**

**Exams**

1st Exam, October 3 – 15% of final grade.  
2nd Exam, December 5 – 20% of final grade

**Essays**

All essays should contain the following at the top of the first page: name, word count, date, and a meaningful title. In addition, any use of sources must be cited using Chicago-style footnotes (see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) for help or you may ask the instructor). A title page and works cited page are not necessary. At the end of each essay, the Rhodes pledge should be printed and signed.

1<sup>st</sup> Essay due in class, September 16 – 10% of final grade

Please construct a 500-750 word essay of the following topic: how did the issue of communism bring conservatives together. Did this fusion of interests make sense?

2nd Essay due in class, October 21 – 10% of final grade

Look at the selections from *God and Man at Yale*. Try to understand what William F. Buckley is criticizing at Yale and what problems he sees in higher education in 1951. Then, I would like you to construct a 500-1000 word essay entitled, *God and Man at Rhodes*. In this essay, I would like you to hypothesize about what Buckley might say about Rhodes and its effectiveness in teaching current students. Be sure to touch on some of the same things that Buckley did at Yale over 50 years ago.

3rd Essay due in class, November 18 – 5% of final grade

Using this week's readings as your guide, please construct a memorial to Ronald Reagan that will appear in Washington D.C. Be sure to incorporate historical themes from his presidency into your design. Why was he such an influential president? How can you convey that in a memorial? Describe your choices in a 250-500 word abstract. Visual aids for this assignment are required.

Final Essay due in class, April 18 – 30% of final grade

For the final essay of the course, you are to choose a topic on American conservatism and write a research paper related to the themes of the course. You may select a particular issue, individual, or theme for your topic. The essay will be a minimum of 2500 words.

Deadlines for final essay:

September 21 – a topic paragraph on your proposed essay, due in class

October 28 – a final bibliography of sources, due in class

November 30 – a final copy of the essay, due in class (e-mail copy to saxer@rhodes.edu)

### **Class Participation**

Active participation in class discussion – 10% of final grade. Active participation in class discussion is the best way to achieve a good class participation grade. Class participation also includes good conduct. Failure to participate in class, neglecting to do the reading for the day, sleeping or leaving during class, playing games on your laptop or doing text messaging during class may all have a negative impact on your grade.

### Course Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three absences without penalty. Students are required to find out what they missed in class on the day of their absence. If students miss more than three classes, they are required to meet with the professor to discuss their absences. Failure to do so will result in the lowering of a student's final grade by one third grade point for every absence over three. Please consider this policy when planning for extracurricular activities (sports, mock trial, etc.)

Due dates and times for writing assignments and exams are fixed. All assignments are due in class, not in the professor's mailbox. Late assignments will receive a failing grade. All assignments must be turned in to the professor. Failure to complete an assignment will result in a failing grade for the class. If you have questions about plagiarism, please talk to me directly.

The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate commitment to the Code, each student must write "pledged" and sign his/her name on every assignment.

### August 24, 26

What is Conservatism?

The Klan as Social Commentary: New Perspectives on the KKK

### August 29, 31, September 2

Conservatism in the “Roaring” 20s: The Agrarians; The Lessons of Silent Cal  
The “Old Right” and Conservative Armageddon: Rise of the New Deal and the American  
Liberty League  
WWII and the America First Committee  
 (“The Old Right,” Southern Agrarians,” “Monarch as Alternative,” “Radical  
Individualism: The State as Enemy” and “Conservatism Takes Shape: Human Events” 5-  
48 in *Conservatism in America*)

September 5

Labor Day – No class

September 7, 9

Roots of the New Right:  
F.A. Hayek and the Libertarians  
Russell Kirk and the Traditionalists

(“Classical Liberalism,” “Resurrecting the Abandoned Road,” Getting Together,” and  
“Defining Principles,” “Traditionalism,” “The Quest for Order,” “The Conservative  
Mind,” and “A Rebel in Search of Tradition,” 49-130 in *Conservatism in America*)

September 12, 14, 16

*The Issue: Communism and Conservatives*

(“Anticommunism,” “A Witness,” “The Communist Mind,” “Khrushchev at the U.N.”  
and “The Hungarian Pledge,” 131-170 in *Conservatism in America*)

**1<sup>st</sup> Essay due in class, September 16**

September 19, 21, 23

Fusion: William F. Buckley and the National Review  
Lunatic Fringe?: The John Birch Society, The Far Right and the Challenge of  
Mainstreaming Conservatism

(“Fusion,” “A Rebel Finds His Tradition,” Why I am Not a Conservative,” “National  
Review: Statement of Intentions,” and “National Review: Credenda and Statement of  
Principles,” 169-200 in *Conservatism in America*)

**Topic paragraph for final essay due in class, September 21**

September 26, 28, 30

Champions of the New Right: The Goldwater Campaign  
Reagan Revolution, Pt. 1: Reagan before the White House

(“The Plunge into Politics,” “The Conscience of a Conservative,” “The Young  
Americans for Freedom,” “The Sharon Statement,” “A Choice, Not an Echo”)

October 3

**1<sup>st</sup> Exam**

October 5, 7

Is Conservatism White?: George Wallace  
Republicans and Race

(Carter, all)

October 10, 12, 14

The Breakdown of Liberalism: Conservative Response to the Sixties  
Women and the Conservative Movement  
A New Home: The New Libertarians

("Libertarianism," "The Libertarian Review," "Why Be Libertarian?," "Libertarianism or  
Libertinism?," "What is Libertarianism?," "New Rights," "An Emerging Conservative  
Majority," and "Message From MARS," 247-317 in *Conservatism in America*)

October 17

Fall break – no class

October 19, 21

The Door Opens: Nixon and the Fall of Modern Republicanism  
City on a Hill: Conservative Christianity in Culture and Politics

**2nd Essay due in class, October 21**

October 24, 26, 28

Christian conservatives continued

Reagan Revolution, Pt. 2:

Conservatism Triumphant?

(Ehrman & Flamm, 1-100; "The Reagan Era," "The Great Communicator: Three  
Speeches," and "Looking Back at the Gipper," 337-372 in *Conservatism in America*)

**Bibliography for final essay due in class, October 28**

October 31, November 2, 4

Reagan Wins the Cold War!

(Finish Ehrman & Flamm)

November 7, 9, 11

Cracks in the Foundation: Neocons vs. Paleoconservatives

(“Why Big Business is Good for America” and “Why I Am Not a Neoconservative, and  
“Of What Use is Tradition,” and “Conservative Splits,” 318-336, 373-394 in  
*Conservatism in America*)

November 14, 16, 18

After Reagan: New Directions in Conservatism  
Pat Buchanan vs. the Republicans

(“Conservatism after Reagan,” “A Republic, Not an Empire,” and “Contract with  
America,” 395-413, 424-427 in *Conservatism in America*)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Essay due in class, November 18**

November 21

A Divided Nation?: Culture Wars

November 23, 25

Thanksgiving Break

November 28, 30, December 2

Tensions in Modern Conservatism

(“Beautiful Losers,” “An Open Letter to Conservatives,” and “What’s Right,” 414-423  
and 428-436 in *Conservatism in America*)

**Final Essay due in class, November 30**

December 5

**Final Exam**

December 7

Evaluation