

**Princeton University
Department of Politics**

**POL 423 – American Political Thought, Colonial Era to Civil War
Spring 2020**

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TH 1:30-4:20

office hours: by appointment

This seminar will explore recurring themes and problems in American political thought. The course will draw on primary and secondary sources relating to the ideas and actions that have shaped the American conception of freedom, democracy, community, and nationhood. It will consider these works as contributions to political theory, but it will also focus on the relationship between political ideas and political and social events. The course will focus on the period from the colonial era through the Civil War.

Schedule:

1. Feb. 6: Thinking about American Political Thought
2. Feb. 13: Colonial Thought
3. Feb. 20: Revolution
4. Feb. 27: Founding
5. March 5: The “Other Founding”
6. March 12: Launching American Politics
7. March 26: Democratizing Politics
8. April 2: Individualism
9. April 9: America in the World
10. April 16: Slavery and Equality
11. April 23: Union
12. April 30: New Foundings

Readings:

1. Thinking about American Political Thought
 - Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, ch. 1 (**Blackboard**)
 - Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal and Hartz,” *APSR* (1993) (**Blackboard**)
 - Keith Whittington, “Introduction to American Political Thought” (book)
2. Colonial Thought
 - Massachusetts Body of Liberties ([web](#))
 - Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent* (book)
 - John Cotton, “Exposition on the 13th Chapter” (book)
 - John Cotton, *The Bloudy Tenent Washed* ([web](#))
 - John Winthrop, “Little Speech on Liberty” (book)

John Winthrop, *Arbitrary Government Described* ([web](#))
John Wise, *A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches* (book)
Thomas Tryon, *The Planter's Speech to His Neighbors* ([web](#))
Robert Cushman, *The Sin and Danger of Self-Love* ([web](#))
John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity* (book)
Cotton Mather, *A Christian at his Calling* (book)
Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth" (book)

Suggested:

Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* ([web](#))
John Cotton, "Letter to Lord Say and Seal" ([web](#))
Elisha Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants* ([web](#))
Robert Cushman, *The Lawfulness of Moving out of England and into America* ([web](#))
Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia* ([web](#))
Benjamin Franklin, "Positions to be Examined, Concerning the National Wealth" ([web](#))

3. Revolution

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (book)
John Adams, Letter to James Sullivan ([web](#))
Jonathan Mayhew, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* (book)
William Henry Drayton, *Letters of Freeman* (book)
Address of the Mechanics of New York ([web](#))
Charles Inglis, *The True Interest of America* ([web](#))
John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (book)
Daniel Leonard, *Massachusettensis* (book)
Jonathan Boucher, "On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience, and Nonresistance" (book)
Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (book)

Suggested:

James Otis, *Rights of the British Colony* ([web](#))
Patrick Henry, *Give Me Liberty Speech* ([web](#))
John Adams, *Novanglus* ([web](#))
Thomas Paine, *Thoughts on Defensive War* ([web](#))
Samuel Davies, *The Curse of Cowardice* ([web](#))

4. Founding

John Adams, "Thoughts on Government" (book)
Carter Braxton, *An Address to the Convention of the Colony* (book)
Alexander Hamilton, Letter to James Duane (book)
George Washington, *Circular Letter to the Governors* (book)
James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States" (book)
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers* (book)
James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (book)
John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (book)

Suggested:

George Washington, Letter to Governor Benjamin Harrison ([web](#))
Pelatiah Webster, Fifth Essay on Free Trade and Finance ([web](#))

5. The “Other” Founding

Samuel Adams, To the King’s Commissioners ([web](#))
Dissent of Pennsylvania Minority ([web](#))
Robert Yates and John Lansing, Letter to Governor George Clinton ([web](#))
Samuel Adams, Letter to Richard Henry Lee ([web](#))
Letters from a Federal Farmer (book)
“Brutus” (book)
Thomas Jefferson, An Act for Establishing Religious Freedom (book)
Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (book)
Correspondence of Abigail Adams and John Adams (book)

Suggested:

Thomas Paine, An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex ([web](#))
Thomas Paine, African Slavery in America ([web](#))
James Dana, Sermon on the African Slave Trade ([web](#))
Prince Hall, Petition to the Massachusetts Legislature ([web](#))

6. Launching American Politics

Alexander Hamilton, First Report on Public Credit (book)
Alexander Hamilton, Report on Manufacturers (book)
George Washington, Farewell Address (book)
Thomas Jefferson, Kentucky Resolutions (book)
Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address (book)
Thomas Jefferson, To the Danbury Baptists (book)
Thomas Jefferson, To Samuel Kercheval (book)
Thomas Jefferson, To John Adams (book)
Robert Harper, An Address to the People of South Carolina ([web](#))
Timothy Ford, The Constitutionalist ([web](#))
Fisher Ames, “The Mire of Democracy” (book)
Judith Sargent Murray, The Necessity of Subordination (book)
Judith Sargent Murray, On the Equality of the Sexes ([web](#))

Suggested:

George Logan, Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry ([web](#))
Joseph Priestley, Maxims of Political Arithmetic ([web](#))
Timothy Dwight, The Duty of Americans ([web](#))
Timothy Dwight, An Oration on the Promotion of Freedom ([web](#))
Fisher Ames, The Dangers of American Liberty ([web](#))
John Thornton Kirkland, An Oration ([web](#))

7. Democratizing Politics

James Kent and David Buel, New York Constitutional Convention of 1821 (book)
John Augustine Smith, Lectures on Government ([web](#))

John R. Cooke & Abel Parker Upshur, Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829 ([web](#))
Memorial of the Non-Freeholders of Richmond ([web](#))
Martin Van Buren, Letter to Thomas Ritchie ([web](#))
George Bancroft, Office of the People in Art, Government and Religion (book)
Horace Greeley, Why I am a Whig ([web](#))
George Colton, Responsibility of the Ballot Box (book)
Hannah Mather Crocker, Observations on the Real Rights of Women ([web](#))
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (book)
Andrew Jackson, Veto of the Bank Bill (book)
William Leggett, True Functions of Government (book)
Henry Clay, Speech on the American System (book)
Orestes Brownson, The Laboring Classes (book)

Suggested:

Calvin Colton, The Junius Tracts ([web](#))
Thomas Skidmore, The Rights of Man to Property! ([web](#))
Boston Ten-Hour Circular ([web](#))
John Tyler, Tyranny Unmasked (book)
Albert Gallatin, The Free Trade Memorial ([web](#))
Horace Mann, The Massachusetts System of Common Schools ([web](#))

8. Individualism

Lyman Beecher, Practicality of Suppressing Vice (book)
Robert Owen, Two Discourses on a New System of Society ([web](#))
Albert Brisbane, Concise Exposition of the Doctrine of Association ([web](#))
T.W. Dyott, Exposition of the System of Moral and Mental Labor ([web](#))
Horace Greeley and Henry J. Raymond, Association Discussed ([web](#))
Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (book)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance ([web](#))
Ralph Waldo Emerson, On Politics (book)
John C. Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government* (book)
Theodore Parker, Law of God and the Statutes of Men (book)

Suggested:

Lyman Beecher, Lectures on Political Atheism ([web](#))
The Providence Association of the Friends of Moral Reform ([web](#))
Report of the Pennsylvania Select Committee on Vice and Immorality ([web](#))

9. America in the World

George Washington, Farewell Address (book)
John Quincy Adams, Speech on Independence Day (book)
James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message (book)
Sylvanus Haynes, A Sermon to the Vermont Militia ([web](#))
William Ellery Channing, Sermon on War ([web](#))
Samuel F.B. Morse, Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions (book)
Samuel Busey, Immigration ([web](#))

Louis Schade, The Immigration into the United States ([web](#))
Norman Asing, To His Excellency Gov. Bigler ([web](#))
John Bigler, Message on Chinese Immigration ([web](#))
Andrew Jackson, Speech on Indian Removal (book)
Memorial of the Cherokee Nation (book)
John L. O'Sullivan, Manifest Destiny (book)
Robert Winthrop and John Chipman, The Oregon Question and Manifest Destiny ([web](#))

Suggested:

David Low Dodge, War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ ([web](#))
Miles Sanford, The True Elements of National Greatness and Prosperity ([web](#))
Charles Sumner, The True Grandeur of Nations ([web](#))
Adin Ballou, Christian Non-Resistance ([web](#))
William Seward, Instructions to Great Britain ([web](#))

10. Slavery and Equality

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (book)
Correspondence of Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson (book)
Memorial of the Free People of Color to the Citizens of Baltimore (book)
William Lloyd Garrison, Declaration of Principles of the *Liberator* (book)
Frederick Douglass, What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (book)
William West, "Wages Slavery and Chattel Slavery" ([web](#))
George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* (book)
James Hammond, Speech to the Senate on Slavery (book)
Alexander H. Stephens, Cornerstone Speech (book)
William Sumner, The Barbarism of Slavery (book)
Abraham Lincoln, Cooper Union Address ([web](#))
Abraham Lincoln, Speech at New Haven (book)

Suggested:

Samuel Sewall, The Selling of Joseph ([web](#))
John Saffin, A Brief and Candid Answer ([web](#))
John Woolman, Some Considerations on Keeping Negroes ([web](#))
Thomas Paine, African Slavery in America ([web](#))
James Dana, Sermon on the African Slave Trade ([web](#))
Prince Hall, Petition to the Massachusetts Legislature ([web](#))
Abraham Lincoln, Speech at Peoria ([web](#))
Henry C. Wright, No Rights, No Duty ([web](#))

11. Union

Massachusetts Resolution & Virginia Reply regarding Virginia Resolution of 1798 ([web](#))
John Marshall, Opinion in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (book)
John Taylor, *Constructions Construed and Constitutions Vindicated* ([web](#))
Daniel Webster, Second Speech on Foot's Resolution ([web](#))
John Calhoun, Fort Hill Address (**Blackboard**)
Andrew Jackson, Proclamation on Nullification ([web](#))

Abraham Lincoln, House Divided Speech at Springfield ([web](#))
Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural (book)
Abraham Lincoln, Fourth of July Message to Congress (book)
Jefferson Davis, The Right of Secession ([web](#))

Suggested:

South Carolina Exposition and Protest ([web](#))
William Henry Seward, The Irrepressible Conflict ([web](#))
Alexander H. Stephens, *A Constitutional view of the Late War Between the States* ([web](#))
Texas v. White (**Blackboard**)

12. New Foundings

Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (book)
Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (book)
Thaddeus Stevens, Speech on the Reconstruction Acts (book)
Albion Tourgee, A Fool's Errand ([web](#))
Frederick Douglass, Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln (book)
Susan B. Anthony, "Is it a Crime for a Citizen of the United State to Vote?" (book)
Elisha Mulford, *The Nation* ([web](#))
John Ferguson Hume, The Five Hundred Majority ([web](#))
Abraham Lincoln, First Annual Message (book)
Albert Conwell, Acres of Diamonds (book)
Ben E. Green, The Irrepressible Conflict between Labor and Capital ([web](#))

Suggested:

Charles Sumner, Equal Rights ([web](#))
Albert T. Bledsoe, "What is Liberty?" ([web](#))
Josiah Warren, True Civilization ([web](#))
Charles Moran, Government ([web](#))
C. Osborne Ward, A Labor Catechism of Political Economy ([web](#))

Materials:

The readings (all excerpts from primary documents with introductory material) are available in a book and a companion website. The items from the book are listed on the syllabus as "book" and those on the website are listed with a hyperlink to "web." A couple of items will be posted in the course materials section of the Blackboard course website.

The book is Keith E. Whittington, *American Political Thought: Readings and Materials* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Students will be expected to have access to the readings during seminar discussions, in either electronic or hard copy form.

Requirements:

The requirements for the course include both written and oral components. All students are expected to come to class fully prepared to be active participants. A seminar cannot work unless all of its participants are prepared to make useful contributions, and you will not be able to take full advantage of the seminar if you are not prepared. Participation will be a significant component of your final grade. You will also be expected to give two scheduled oral presentations, which will contribute to part of your participation grade.

One oral presentation may accompany your short paper (5-10 pages) which will examine the issues in a given week's readings. The bulk of your grade will be determined by a term paper. This research paper (20-25 pages) will focus on a topic of your own choosing, approved by me before October 1. Topics for the research paper should be emailed to me. An electronic copy of the paper will be due to me by email by 4:00 pm, May 12 ("Dean's Date"). For the research paper, you will be expected to draw not only on the class materials but also on additional materials that you find outside of class. There are suggestions for additional primary and secondary works at the end of each chapter of the book. There are additional primary materials at the companion website at <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199338863/>

Term Paper	50%
Short Paper	30%
Class Participation	20%