

Fall 2007

Prof. Scott Yenor

Political Science 331: American Political Thought

M 6-9 pm.; MPC 207

Office Hours: M 1:30 -3:00; MWF 10:30-11:30, or by appointment.

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Course Description:

One famous scholar from the mid-twentieth century rightly claimed that America's was a liberal tradition. It is a liberal tradition, however, that would best be understood as a tradition of liberalisms, of differing branches of what it means to be a liberal. In fact, the difference among our liberal traditions is really the American liberal tradition. These traditions differ on the meaning of property, the probable locus of tyranny, the proper structure of government, the goodness of centralized government, the centrality of self-government, and the nature of liberty. Identifying what the differences are and why they arose is one of the main goals of this course. But if this is all we accomplish, we will have not done enough. The ultimate aim of this course is to decide whether the difference liberal traditions represent a progressive development or a fall from grace, whether contemporary conceptions are superior to classical conceptions of liberty.

Required Books

Jonathan Rauch, *Government's End* (PublicAffairs, 1999)

John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*. (Prometheus, 1999)

Woodrow Wilson, *The Essential Political Writings of Woodrow Wilson*, Ed. R.J.

Pestritto (Lexington Books, 2005)

The Federalist Papers, Edited by Clinton Rossiter with a new introduction and notes by Charles R. Kesler (Mentor Books, 1961, 1999)

Assignments and Grades:

Failure to complete all assignments and to take all examinations will result in a failure for the entire course. Course grades will be determined as follows:

Book Review. Students will write an analytical review of *Government's End*. The review has two sections. The first part is a summary sheet for the book, containing bibliographical information and a short (no more than one half page) summary or abstract of the book's argument. An abstract is a 75-100-word paragraph, set apart from the rest of the paper, which provides the readers with an overview of the review. It should express the book's main idea and key points; it might also briefly suggest any implications or applications of the paper. The second part of the book review is an account of how Rauch reached his conclusions. This part should include an account of what debate Rauch was addressing, where his argument fits within the debate, his thesis, a summary of the evidence that he marshals to support his thesis, and, finally, an account of the strengths and weaknesses of the book (50 points or 10% of course grade).

Papers. Students will be assigned three paper topics during the semester. Assignments will be handed out at least a week in advance of the due date. These papers will always concern future readings, so that students have maximum opportunity to develop their independent capacities as thinkers (300 points or 60% of the course grade).

Summary Argument. Students will write a 4 to 6 page paper containing an argument about whether developments in the American liberal traditions constitute progress or decline; in other words, students are to represent the different American traditions and make an argument for the superiority of one over the others (50 points or 10% of the course grade).

Exam. The final exam will cover readings and class material. A list of topics and questions may be handed out before the exam. The exam itself may include essay questions and short answer questions (100 points or 20% of the course grade).

Standards:

Since there is often confusion about the quality of work to which letter grades correspond, perhaps a brief summary of my approach will clarify things. The grade of C means that work reflects an understanding of the material, an understanding of the question, and an adequate presentation of the material in written or spoken form. Grades below a C fail to achieve this rather wide mark – the work does not reflect an understanding of the material or an understanding of what the questions of political thought are, or the work is not adequately presented. The grade of B means that the student clearly understands and articulates the issues at hand and can convey this understanding with well-chosen, well considered illustrations or a substantive, clear presentation of the more abstract material. The grade of A is reserved for work that demonstrates a facility to go beyond understanding, illustrating, or applying. Such work betrays an ability to analyze and evaluate the material at hand, to put the questions into a different context, to demonstrate what is at stake in a particular question or, more generally, to bring clearly articulated insight to the task at hand. To assist in fleshing out these standards, the instructor has posted the grading grid he uses in grading written assignments on the Blackboard site.

Make Up/ Extension Policy:

Students are expected to complete all assignments by the specified dates, unless excuse beforehand by the instructor. A problem with a computer is not a valid excuse for lateness. All written assignments are due in class on the assigned date. Late papers will be downgraded one letter grade for each class period late. No written assignments will be accepted after December 10 and all outstanding assignments will receive a zero. Absences from exams will result in a zero for the exam, unless the instructor excuses the student beforehand or unless the student has a valid excuse. In the case of valid excuse, the student will make the exam up with all deliberate speed.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own. Consequences for plagiarism or academic dishonesty may range from failure on a particular assignment

to failure for the entire class. The statement of Academic Honesty in the 2007/2008 Boise State University Undergraduate Catalog will serve as our guide.

Reading schedule:

The reading schedule will proceed as close as possible to the following. Any amendments to the schedule will be made as explicit as possible. Please note that the nature of the subject matter – and the interests and questions of students – will almost certainly require revisions in this schedule.

Date	Topic	Reading
Aug 27	Course Introduction	
Sept 3	No Class.	Labor Day.
Sept 10	The Problem of Contemporary Govt.	Jonathan Rauch, Government’s End, entire. Book Review Due.
Sept 17	The American Meanings of Tyranny: Founding, Progressives, and Today.	John Locke, 2nd Treatise , Chapter 18; FDR, Acceptance Speech , 1936; John Stuart Mill, On Liberty , Chapter 4.
Sept 24	The Founders and the Natural Ends of Govt.	John Locke, 2nd Treatise , Chapters 5 and 9. Declaration of Independence in The Federalist Papers, p. 496. Preambles to State Constitutions. James Madison, “ Property ” (1792). Alexander Hamilton, “Report on Manufacturing” (1791) (handout).
Oct 1	Progressivism, Property, and Growth: From Nature to History	Dewey, Individualism Old and New, Chaps. 1, 2, and 4. Woodrow Wilson, “Author’s and Signers of the Declaration” and “Socialism and Democracy,” in Essential Political Writings of Woodrow Wilson (EWW). Walter Raushenbusch, “The Socializing of Property,” from Christianizing the Social Order, Part VI.III (handout) Recommended: Rex Tugwell, Address . PAPER # 1 DUE.
Oct 8	Securing Liberty and Property: Separation of Powers	Federalists 10, 37, 47-51, 55-56, 62-63, and 70-72.
Oct 15	Securing Liberty and Property: Representative Govt, Federalism, Limited Govt.	Federalists 23, 32, 33, 39 and 44. Marshall, McCullough v. Maryland . Marshall, Gibbons v. Ogden . JM to T. Jefferson (24 Oct 1787). Madison, Notes of Debates in Federal Convention : May 29-31, June 8, June 15-

		20.
Oct 22	Separation of Powers and the Organic State	Woodrow Wilson, Christ's Army," "Christian Progress," "Socialism and Democracy," "Cabinet Government in the United States, and "The State" in EWW.
Oct 29	Growth and the New Freedom.	Woodrow Wilson, "The New Freedom," and "Constitutional Government" in EWW. Dewey, Individualism Old and New, Chs 5, 6 And 8. Dewey, " The Future of Liberalism ."*** PAPER # 2 DUE.
Nov 5	Administration and Episodes in Progressive Government	Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration" in EWW. FDR, " Commonwealth Club Address ," " Address on Constitution Day ," and " Annual Message, 1944 ." Recommended: Higgs, Crisis and Leviathan, Chapter 8.
Nov 12	Hamiltonian Echoes: Natural Rights and Progressivism.	Croly, Promise of American Life, Chapters 1 & 2 (handout). Hamilton, "Report on Manufacturing."
Nov 19	No Class. T-Giving	Gobble! Gobble!
Nov 26	The End of Republican Government: From Progressives to Non-Foundationalism	Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Chapter 3 (handout). John Rawls, Political Liberalism, Lecture 1.2-3 and Lecture 4 (handout).
Dec 3	From the Administrative State to Judicial Supremacy	Goodnow, Politics and Administration, Chapter 6 (handout). Rawls, Political Liberalism, Lecture 6. Lochner v. New York ; Griswold v. Connecticut , and Kelo v. New London . PAPER # 3 DUE.
Dec 10	Review and Conclusion	Summary Argument Due.