

American Political Ideology in Comparative Perspective

Daniela Cammack

Upper-level Undergraduate Seminar -- Draft

What, if anything, is distinctively *American* about American political thought? This course examines key elements of American political ideology from the colonial era to the twenty-first century, alongside selected non-American texts. With the exception of the first week, the reading consists entirely of primary materials.

Requirements: two in-class presentations of the week's readings (to be prepared with at least one other student); two written response papers, to be written on the material of any other two weeks of the course; regular class attendance and participation; and a final paper of around 20 pages.

Reading policy: The suggested reading for this course is quite extensive. However, I don't want to distinguish between required and recommended readings, since I'd like every reading to be read by someone, every week. I also want the full selection of materials to be available to you in your coursepacks, for use when planning papers. But not every item needs to be read by *everyone* every week, and I'm happy to let your curiosity guide your engagement with the course to some extent. Hence, the system is this: you may email me before class to tell me which of the week's readings you have *not* read, and I will assume that you are prepared to talk about all the others. If, as the course proceeds, it looks like this system is proving inadequate, I reserve the right to change it.

One final thing: this reading policy does not apply to Week 1. I'd like everyone interested in the class to take a look at those readings, which we'll continue to refer to during the course.

Overview:

1. A Distinctively American Political Ideology?
2. Europeans in the New World
3. Politics in a Puritan Age
4. The Self-Made Man in the Self-made Nation
5. Resistance and Rebellion
6. Founding Documents -- and What to Put In Them
7. Political and/or Social Equality?
8. Possessive Individualism and its Opportunities...
9. ...and its Critics
10. The Integration of Outsiders 1. Slavery and its Legacies
11. The Integration of Outsiders 2. Women
12. The Integration of Outsiders 3. Immigration and Religion
13. Pushing Back the Boundaries: America and its Place in the World

WEEK 1. A Distinctively American Political Ideology?

What's so American about American political thought? Is there anything peculiarly American about it? Might the most distinctive feature of American political thinking even be the recurring conviction that there is something distinctive about it?

Daniel T. Rodgers, 'Prologue,' *Contested Truths* (Basic Books, 1987), 3-16

Samuel Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Harvard, 1991), 12-59

Jennifer Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton, 1999), 1-38

Robert Dahl, 'On Removing Certain Impediments to Democracy in the United States,' *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 92, no. 1 (Spring 1977)

WEEK 2. Europeans in the New World

This week's readings consider the clashes between native peoples and colonizers in the Spanish and British empires, and in particular the way the newcomers conceived of their place and purpose in the New World. How was the colonization of the New World justified by the colonizers to themselves? To the European world they'd left behind?

Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin, 1992), 3-25

Peter Nabokov ed. *Native Indian Testimony* 'Exchange Between Worlds,' 'Bearers of the Cross' and 'Living Beside Each Other,' 32-89

Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of his Promises Displayed: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) ed. Neal Salisbury (Bedford/St. Martins, 1997)

Captain John Smith, Part Five ('The Future of Colonization') in Karen Kupperman ed., *Captain John Smith: A Select Edition of His Writings* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 238-86

John Locke, 'Property,' in *Second Treatise on Government* ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, 1960), 285-302

WEEK 3. Politics in a Puritan Age

The importance of religion in political life in seventeenth-century England and New England is the focus of this week's texts. (Please begin with the Hobbes excerpt, on the religious origins of the English Civil War).

Thomas Hobbes, 'Dialogue I' in *Behemoth* (completed 1668) ed. Stephen Holmes (Chicago, 1990), 1-33

John Winthrop, 'A Modell of Christian Charity' (1630) and 'On Liberty' (1645)

Michael Wigglesworth, 'God's Controversy With New-England' (1662)

Donald S. Lutz ed., *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution* (Liberty Fund, 1998)

'Agreement Between the Settlers at New Plymouth [The Mayflower Compact]' (1620), 31-2

'Plymouth Oath of Allegiance and Fidelity' (1625), 33-4

'Salem Covenant of 1629,' 35

'The Massachusetts Body of Liberties' (1641), 70-87

'Providence Agreement' (1637), 161-2

'An Act for Freedom of Conscience' (1682) p. 287-9

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) ed. Patrick Romanell (Library of Liberal Arts, 1955)

WEEK 4. The Self-Made Man in the Self-made Nation

Franklin's famous text is the only reading material for this week. However, I will lead the discussion for this class by setting Franklin's work in the context of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Rousseau's *Confessions*.

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin with Related Documents* (1790) ed. Louis P. Masur (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003)

WEEK 5. Resistance and Rebellion

This week's readings present the American Revolution in a more diverse range of perspectives (including British and Canadian) than usual, the better to pick out those aspects that are considered distinctively "American."

John Lilburne, 'The Freeman's Freedom Vindicated' (1646) in Andrew Sharp ed., *The English Levellers* (Cambridge, 1998), 31-2

Jonathan Mayhew, 'A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the High Powers' (1750)

Tom Paine, 'A Serious Thought' (1775) and 'Common Sense' (1776) in *Common Sense and Related Writings* ed. Thomas P. Slaughter, 62-3, 72-119

Samuel Johnson, 'Taxation No Tyranny' (1775)

Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Conciliation with America' (1775) in *Burke on Empire, Liberty and Reform: Speeches and Letters* ed. David Bromwich (Yale, 2000), 62-134

Anonymous, 'Thoughts on the Quebec Act' (T. Beckett, 1774)

WEEK 6. Founding Documents -- and What to Put In Them

This week's readings focus on the purposes, significance and contents of founding documents (including declarations of independence, constitutions and bills of rights). Questions to think about include the relationship of rights to constitutions; the effects of constitutions on political practice; the boundary between the public and the private spheres; assumptions about constitutional alteration and entrenchment; and the possible political role of the judiciary. Finally, how does a distinctive take on these questions influence the contemporary American political imagination?

The Levellers, 'An Agreement of the People' in Andrew Sharp ed., *The English Levellers* (Cambridge, 1998), 92-101

Thomas Jefferson, 'A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled' [Jefferson's Draft] and 'The Declaration of Independence' [as amended and adopted in Congress, July 4, 1776] in *Jefferson: Political Writings* ed. Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball (Cambridge, 1999), 96-107

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789)

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and James Jay, *The Federalist Papers* ed. Clinton Rossiter (Penguin, 1961), especially numbers 1, 9, 10, 14, 23, 37, 40, 41, 47, 49, 57, 78, 84, 85

Ralph Ketcham ed., *The Anti-Federalist Papers* (Penguin, 1986), 184-269, 336-356

Noah Webster, 'Bills of Rights' in *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings* (Boston, 1790), 45-8

Tom Paine, 'Of Constitutions' in *Rights of Man Part II* (1792) in *Rights of Man* ed. Eric Foner (Penguin, 1984), 185-209

Elhanan Winchester, 'A Plain Political Catechism, Intended for the Use of Schools' (1796), 66-70

Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question' in *Marx: Early Writings* trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Penguin, 1975), 227-34

Lysander Spooner, 'No Treason! VI. The Constitution of No Authority' (1870) (Ralph Myles, 1973), 11-13, 23-27

WEEK 7. Political and/or Social Equality?

Here, we examine two foreigners' views of life in America in the 1830s, one fairly conservative French man and one more radical British woman. How are American democracy and egalitarianism conceived and treated in each?

These are both long texts: I do NOT expect you to read every page. However, I do expect you to skim and get a sense of the primary concerns of both books, as well as read some sections more carefully. Use the contents and indices to guide you to whatever you think sounds most interesting, and bring notes with page numbers to class so that you're ready to draw attention to the parts that you found most striking.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/1840) ed. J. P. Mayer (HarperCollins, 1966)

Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (1837) ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (Transaction Publishers, 1981)

WEEK 8. Possessive Individualism and its Opportunities...

An introduction to the conception and practice of Anglo-American capitalism. How far do these texts have their roots in those seen so far (consider especially Franklin's *Autobiography*, read in Week 4). What social conditions and individual characteristics are admired by these writers? How do these conditions and characteristics relate to each other, if at all?

Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859) (John Murray, 1958), 'Preface' and 'Self-Help: National and Individual,' 33-57

William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883) (Caxton, 2003)

Werner Sombart, *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* (1906) 'Introduction,' 3-24

Peter Nabokov ed., *Native Indian Testimony* 'The Flood Has Come' (Chapter 12), 232-55

Friedrich Hayek, 'Liberalism: Systematic' (1973)

*** A list of suggested questions for final papers will be distributed this week. If you would like to set your own question, it must be approved by me before next week's class. ***

WEEK 9. ...And Its Critics

This week's readings may be described as Southern, Western, transcendentalist, English conservative, socialist, anarchist and New Deal critiques of the capitalistic norms of the Northern United States. They thus cover a wide range of perspectives: how do they overlap, and how do they differ?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance' (1841)

Henry David Thoreau, 'Economy' and 'Spring' in *Walden* (1854) ed. Michael Meyer (Penguin, 1983)

George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (1857) ed. C. Vann Woodward (Harvard, 2006), 'Introduction' and 'The Universal Trade,' 7-20

Matthew Arnold, *Civilisation in the United States: First and Last Impressions of America* (1888) Part IV, 'Civilization in the United States,' 157-92

Populist Party Platform (1896)

William Jennings Bryan, 'Cross of Gold' (1896)

Henry Adams, 'The Dynamo and the Virgin' from *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907)

Eugene Debs, 'The Socialist Party and the Working Class' (1904)

Emma Goldman, 'Anarchism: What it Really Stands For' (1917)

Richard D. Polenberg, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Bedford, 2000), Ch. 2

WEEK 10. The Integration of Outsiders 1. Slavery and its Legacy

This week we examine slavery and its legacy in the Americas. Each of these writers regards these issues as a profound problem: how do they conceptualize that problem? And its possible solutions? What changes in discursive strategies appear over time?

Hannah More, 'Slavery' (1778)

David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), Preamble, Article I, Article IV

James Henry Hammond, 'Letter to An English Abolitionist' (1845) in Drew Faust ed., *The Ideology of Slavery* (LSU Press, 1981)

M. Johnson ed., *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery and the Civil War* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000):

'A House Divided' speech
Lincoln-Douglas Debates
Address at the Cooper Institute
First Inaugural Address
Emancipation Proclamation
Last Public Address

Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (1901), chapters 13-14

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), chapters 1, 3, 9

Martin Luther King, 'I've been to the Mountaintop' (1968)

Barack Obama, 'A More Perfect Union' (2008)

WEEK 11. The Integration of Outsiders 2. Women

These readings consider the moves made to define and address the 'woman question' during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with contributions from both women and men on both sides of the Atlantic. What are the major complaints discussed here? And proposed solutions?

Abigail Adams, 'Remember the Ladies' (1776) and other selected letters in Alice Rossi ed. *The Feminist Papers* (Northeastern, 1988), 7-15

Mary Wollstonecraft, excerpts from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) in Rossi ed., 40-85

Sarah Grimke, 'Letters on the Equality of the Sexes' (1838) (and excerpt from 'A Pastoral Letter') in Rossi ed., 305-18

John Stuart Mill, excerpt from *The Subjection of Women* (1869) in Rossi ed., 196-238

Friedrich Engels, excerpt from *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1888) in Rossi ed., 480-95

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'Seneca Falls Declaration,' (1848), 'Solitude of Self' (1892) and 'Introduction to the Women's Bible' (1895)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* in Rossi ed. 572-98

Jane Addams, 'Utilization of Women in City Government' in Rossi ed. 604-12

WEEK 12. The Integration of Outsiders 3. Immigration and Religion

This week's readings are exclusively American, but they should be compared with texts from Week 3, Week 5 and Week 8. Questions to consider include the toleration and/or assimilation of non-Protestants; the relationship between church and state in the twentieth-century United States; and the emergence of a self-conscious rhetoric of 'Americanization'.

I will lead the discussion for this class by setting this week's readings in the context of recent secondary works, such as Samuel Huntington's *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004).

James Madison, 'Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments' (1785)

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)

Theodore Roosevelt, 'Americanism' (1915) in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, 357-76

Randolph Bourne, 'Trans-National America' (1916)

Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (1908)

Charles Marshall, Letter in *Atlantic Monthly* (1927)

Alfred Smith, Reply to Charles Marshall in *Atlantic Monthly* (1927)

WEEK 13. Pushing back the Boundaries: America and its place in the world

Our final texts address conceptions of the United States' expansion and its role in the world. What effect has the frontier and overseas expansion had on American history and ideological development? How far, if at all, does this support an ideology of American "exceptionalism"?

G. W. F. Hegel, 'The Geographical Basis of History' in *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* ed. and trans. Leo Rauch (Hackett, 1988), 83-91

John O'Sullivan, 'The Great Nation of Futurity,' *The United States Democratic Review* vol. 6, no. 23 (1839)

Karl Marx, 'The Modern Theory of Colonization,' *Capital* vol. I (Penguin, 1976), 930-40 (Chapter 33)

Walt Whitman, 'Pioneers! O pioneers!' (1891)

Mark Twain, 'To the Person Sitting in Darkness' (1901)

Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' in *The Frontier in American History* (1920; Dover, 1996)

Woodrow Wilson, Address to Congress (1918)

John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address (1961)

General Douglas MacArthur, Thayer Award Acceptance Address (1962)

George W. Bush, President Bush Addresses the Nation (2003)

