

POLS 3390
AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT
Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:40 pm
Classroom: Ross Hall 215

Dr. Jacek Lubecki

Office: Stabler Hall 603E

Office Telephone: (501) 683-7029

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 to 4:00 pm (and by appointment)

E-mail: jxlubecki@ualr.edu

Class goals and objectives:

The course is an overview of American political thought – that is, of ideas that come from a cross section of theory and practice of American politics from the colonial to modern times. The most important substantive learning objective is to expose students to classics of American political thought inasmuch they have engaged debates over the normative foundations of the state, the scope of its activities, and the nature of justice.

Besides substantive knowledge goals, the course also intends to solidify various skill goals, including:

- Critical thinking – the ability to read and evaluate primary texts, ideas, theories, and political analysis
- Analysis/Research – the ability to pose and answer questions effectively
- Argumentation/Persuasion – the ability to use logic and evidence to build a persuasive argument
- Written and Verbal Communication – the ability to communicate ideas clearly on paper or through oral presentations

Course Description:

We will proceed following both thematic and chronological order, focusing on the following themes:

- 1) Religion and political life. Moral foundations of state and society (2 weeks)
- 2) American institutional foundation (2 weeks)
- 3) Democracy and the economic order (3 weeks)
- 4) Race and gender (2 weeks)
- 5) Justice and Liberty (2 weeks)

Texts :

There is one required book at the UALR bookstore:

Isaac Kramnick (Ed.), Cornell University, Theodore J. Lowi (Ed.), Cornell University
American Political Thought (A Norton Anthology), Norton, 2008, SBN-13: 978-0-393-92886-0
(Norton)

Evaluation and grade:

Your presence and preparation for our meetings is absolutely crucial for the class. Attendance will be taken. After one unjustified absences, your grade will drop 5 percent for each unjustified absence. An excused absence is only an absence having a doctor's note or is a university-sanctioned absence. If, through our discussions or quizzes, I detect lack of preparation for the

class, 5 percent of your grade will be taken off. In other words, don't come to the class unless you are prepared. The grading scale for the final grade is given below:

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|---------|
| A = 90-100% | B = 89-80% | C = 79-70% | D = 69-60% | F 0-59% |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|---------|

The percentage points for detailed grades are as follows:

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A = 93-100% | B = 83-86% | C = 73-76% | D = 63-66% |
| A- = 90-92% | B- = 80-82% | C- = 70-72% | D- = 60-62% |
| B+ = 87-89% | C+ = 77-79% | D+ = 67-69% | F = 0-59% |

If you simply meet the requirements of the course, that is, do the projects and readings and master the basic concepts; you should expect the grade of C. In order to get a B you need to get beyond what is simply required. An A student's work should be truly outstanding.

I assume little previous knowledge of the topic from you but expect hard work during the course. I am available during my office hours and by appointment. If you need to schedule an appointment e-mail me or call me.

This is a difficult course, that requires a very substantial amount of reading and rigorous preparation on your part.

Conduct of the course:

We will have three major take-home essay assignments (including the final reflection), three small written assignments, and written group-insurgency/counter-insurgency project with a presentation requirement. Grading distribution is given below

| | |
|---|-----|
| Short essay assignments and posts | 60% |
| Presentation and research paper on your favorite American political thinker (10 points for presentation, 20 points for the paper) | 30% |
| Final reflection essay | 10% |

This is an open and democratic class. A vigorous clash of ideas is encouraged and welcome. All of you will be asked to participate in our proceedings, present and discuss your ideas. I will not tolerate ignorance and passivity.

Students beware:

The class and the work that you will do in it is not an exercise in newspaper editorializing and opinion-oriented journalism. I am interested in your analytical judgment based on our class material. We will approach our topic with a detachment and objectivity of social scientists.

You will be required to do a substantial amount of reading and writing. This is not an easy class. I am notorious for requiring my students to write and read a lot. Also, there will be quizzes to make

sure that you reading the class material. Unless you are willing to read and write systematically you should not expect to be able to pass this class.

Disability Support Services

It is the policy of UALR to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in arrangements for seating, examinations, note-taking should **inform the instructor at the beginning of the course**. It is also the policy and practice of UALR to make web-based information accessible to students with disabilities. If you, as a student with a disability, have difficulty accessing any part of the online course materials for this class, please notify the instructor immediately. The chair of the department offering this course is also available to assist with accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services, telephone 501-569-3143, and on the Web at <http://www.ualr.edu/dssdept/>.

Plagiarism and Late Paper:

Plagiarism (using another author's work without acknowledging authorship) will be severely penalized – the penalties will range from an F for the assignment to an F for the course at the discretion of the faculty. Unjustified, late papers will be also penalized at the discretion of the faculty – normally, one letter grade will be dropped for each day of the paper being late.

1. Religion and normative foundations of a state

1. 08/25

Overview of the course. Defining the specificity of American political thought. Thomas Jefferson as the paradigmatic character?

2. 09/01

Religious and social foundations - historical:

Norton, pp. 11-72 (“Colonial Foundations” selections), pp. 337-339 and 344-347. 365-366, and 370-372 (“Thomas Jefferson on religion and American national character”), pp. 554-559 (“Garrison on Slavery”), 572-581 (“Grimke on Slavery”), and pp. 684-685 (“Lincoln’s Second Inaugural”)

3. 09/08

Religious and identity foundation – modern:

pp. 901-907 (Josiah Strong on Anglo-saxon race), 980-985 (Hiram Evans on KKK), pp. 1007-1012 (Rauschenbusch on Christianity and Social Crisis), 1024-1030 (James on Pragmatism), pp. 1290-1301 (Port Huron Statement), pp 1305-1317 (Martin Luther King), 1449-1464 (Walzer on Being American), 1464-1471 (Pat Robertson on American society), 1477-1494 (Sandel on Limits of liberalism), 1494-1501 (Rorty on cultural left), 1503-1511 (McKibben on End of Nature), 1511-1522 (Eztioni)

2. The Foundations

4. 09/15

The foundations:

Pp. 124-139 (Adams on Government), 131-149 (Pain’s Common Sense), 152-4 (Declaration of Independence), 163-170 (Hamilton’s Letter to Duane), 171-181 (The Constitutions), pp. 191

(Adams Defense of the constitution), pp. 191-244 (Selections from Federalist Papers), 224-283 (Debate on the Consitution, and the Bill of Rights)

5. 09/22

Evolution of institutions;

319-323 (Washington's Farwell Address), 323-336 (John Marshall's Consitutional Cases), 348-388 (Jefferson on American institutions, Jefferson and Madison on freedom)

Institutions and their evolution. Class and freedom

6. 09/29

Evolution of institutions and Jacksonian democracy:

pp. 389-505 (various Jacksonian era writers)

7. 10/06

Social Darwinims, Progressivism, and Populism/Socialism

pp. 703-815 (various writings)

8. 10/13

Modern institutions and class

1036-1113 (Progressive era), 1133-1210 (New Deal Age), TBD

3. Gender and Race

9. 10/20

Race

TDB

10. 10/27

Gender

TBD

4. Justice and Liberty. Identity

11. 11/03

Justice and Liberty

TBD

12. 11/10

Justice and Liberty

TBD

5. Presentations

13. 11/17

Presentations

14. 11/24

Presentations

15. 12/01

Presentations

16. 12/08

6:00-8:00 pm

Final: