

“The foundation of our empire was not laid in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epoch when the rights of man were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period; the researches of the human mind, after social happiness, have been carried to a great extent; the Treasures of knowledge, acquired through a long succession of years, by the labours of Philosophers, Sages, and Legislatures, are laid open for our use, and their collected wisdom may be happily applied in the Establishment of our forms of Government; the free cultivation of Letters, the unbounded extension of Commerce, the progressive refinement of Manners, the growing liberality of sentiment, and above all, the pure and benign light of Revelation, have had a meliorating influence on mankind and increased the blessings of Society. At this auspicious period, the United States came into existence as a Nation, and if their Citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be intirely their own.”

-- George Washington, *Circular to the States* (1783)

Political Science 7980

Seminar in American Political Thought: APT and Political Philosophy Fall 2014

American political thinkers have generally understood themselves to draw upon the tradition of political philosophy and the political experience of the Old World from whence they or their forebears came. At the same time, they thought they were introducing something new: new political principles, perhaps, new political institutions, certainly. In this seminar, we will consider the context established by political philosophy in which American political thought developed, will examine what is new or distinctive about that thought, and will ask whether European political theory has sufficiently grasped the American contribution.

Instructor: James Stoner, Stubbs 208B
(225) 578-2538 [office] or (504) 232-4399 [cell]
poston@lsu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 10:00-11:30
Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00, and by appointment

Books available for purchase:

- Pierre Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic* (Harvard University Press) [9780674072947]
- Daniel Dreisbach & Mark Hall, eds., *The Sacred Rights of Conscience: Selected Readings on Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations in the American Founding* (Liberty Fund) [9780865977150]
- James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention* (Ohio) [9780821407653]
- Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Democracy, Liberty, and Property: The State Constitutional Conventions of the 1820s* (Liberty Fund) [9780865977891]
- Robert W. Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (Oxford) [9780195339420]
- William Graham Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (Standard) [9781605977188]
- Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (Robert Schalkenbach Foundation) [9780911312584]

- Johnson, Washington, DuBois, *Three Negro Classics*, ed. Franklin (Avon) [9780380015818]
- Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago) [9780226776897]
- Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) [9780156232005]
- Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard) [9780674430006]

Course requirements:

- Attendance at all class sessions and participation in discussions
- Five 500-word papers on the assigned reading, due before class (and usually read) [team A: 9/8, 9/22, 10/6, 10/20, & 11/3; team B: 9/15, 9/29, 10/13, 10/27, & 11/10]
- One-page annotated bibliography of secondary materials on assigned reading [due in class on date of primary reading assignment: 9/15 through 11/3]
- Research paper, 20-25 pages, on a topic approved by the instructor (preliminary presentation on 11/17, 11/24 or 12/1; final paper due December 11)

SYLLABUS:

Mon., 8/25 Introduction
 Mon., 9/1 LABOR DAY [no class]

I. The Context in Political Philosophy

Mon., 9/8 Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City* [complete]

II. American Foundings

Mon., 9/15 Dreisbach and Hall, eds., *The Sacred Rights of Conscience*, ch. 2-6
 Mon., 9/22 *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention*, May 14-July 16, pp.1-302
 Mon., 9/29 *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention*, July 17- September 17, pp. 302-659
 Mon., 10/6 *Democracy, Liberty, and Property* [read the convention debates of two of the three states: Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia]

III. Crises and Political Development

Mon., 10/13 *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*:
 Lincoln, Speech at Springfield, 6/16/58 (“House Divided”)
 Douglas, Speech at Chicago, 7/9/58
 Debate at Ottawa, 8/21/58
 Debate at Freeport, 8/27/58
 Debate at Jonesboro, 9/15/58 (excerpt: Lincoln’s reply & Douglas’s rejoinder)
 Debate at Charleston, 9/18/58 (excerpt: first two pages)
 Debate at Galesburg, 10/7/58, in *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, pp. 14-115, 144-63, 206-244

- Mon., 10/20 William Graham Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other*
[complete]
Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*. Introductory, V.2, VI.2, VII.1-5,
X.3, Conclusion [recommended: III.1-8]
- Mon., 10/27 Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901), ch. 1-5, 7, 9-10, 12-15
W.E.B. DuBois, *On the Souls of Black Folk* (1903), ch. 1-3, 6, 9-10
- Mon., 11/3 Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, ch. 1, 2, 8, 9
Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience” and “On Violence,” in *Crises of the
Republic*

IV. The Context in Political Philosophy Revisited

- Mon., 11/10 Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, intro., ch. 1, 3, 5, 7-8,
11, 13-16, concl.
- Thurs., 11/13 TOPICS DUE

V. Workshop: Presentation of Research

- Mon., 11/17 Presenting:
- Mon., 11/24 Presenting:
- Mon., 12/1 Presenting:
- Thurs., 12/11 PAPERS DUE