

Y383: Foundations of American Political Thought

Indiana University, Fall 2015

Instructor: Rafael Khachaturian

Class Time: MW 2:30-3:45, Woodburn Hall 121

Office Hours: MW 11:30-1, Woodburn Hall 215

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From the founding period, American political thought has unfolded through the clashing of numerous tensions. A constitution premised on the power of “We, the people” at the same time contained internal limitations on that power. What we now consider to be liberal notions of individual freedom developed alongside republican arguments about what we each owe to the community. A political system established on principles of liberty coexisted alongside a social system based on slavery.

This class traces the origins and persistence of these contrasting ideas, focusing on key debates about individual rights and liberties, republican self-governance, the right of rebellion, and the difficulties of founding a new government. By examining primary sources from that time period, we will analyze the types of institutional and ideological questions that were raised. More broadly, we will also consider fundamental philosophical questions about the purpose and nature of government, what the best and most effective form of government might be, and who benefits and loses under these various arrangements.

Upon successfully completing the course, students will possess knowledge about the historical foundations of American political thought; be able to identify and comment upon the key issues of the founding; to identify different positions on questions concerning the Constitution, limited government, and the bases of rights and liberties; and to link these historical debates to contemporary political issues.

Requirements

Participation:

This is a text-based course, and students are expected to complete the required readings before coming to class. The reading assignments correspond to an upper-level undergraduate course, and I will spend every class clarifying and explaining the arguments being made. Please always bring the relevant texts to class.

I reserve the right to alter reading assignments (either adding or deleting) during the semester, but will work to give you advanced warning of such an event.

The use of cell phones in class is prohibited. Using a laptop for purposes not related to the class will result in a 1-point deduction of the final participation grade. I reserve the right to prohibit the use of laptops at a later point in the semester.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken every day. If you have to miss a class either due to illness or another academic commitment, you must provide written documentation such as a doctor's or administrative note. It is also your responsibility to obtain that day's notes from your classmates.

I will waive one unexcused absence for the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 1-point deduction from the final participation grades.

Students are expected to arrive to class in a prompt fashion. Regular lateness to class will affect your grade. Every two latenesses (10+ minutes) will result in a 1-point deduction from the final participation grade.

Assignments:

Exams: Aside from the above requirements, the course workload will consist of two **non-cumulative** exams. The exams will consist of multiple choice, identification, and short-answer sections.

Exams will only be rescheduled in extenuating circumstances. If you have a scheduling conflict and expect me to consider making any arrangements you **MUST** speak to me in the first two weeks of the course, as well as provide documentation.

Research Paper: Students are required to complete a research paper on a topic of their choosing. The paper should be 8-10 pages (double spaced, size 12 font), and should identify and address a central problem or contentious issue within the scope of the current class.

Examples of general potential topics to consider (research questions will have to be more specific):

- The transfer of English ideas about popular sovereignty into an American context
- Ideas of individualism and community in American political thought – clashing or complementary?
- The similarities and differences of the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution
- The role of the people envisioned by the framers of the Constitution
- The debates between Federalists and Anti-Federalists about the form of government best suited to the United States
- The relationship between the political language of freedom and the institution of slavery

I will be glad to meet with students to discuss potential topics and the progress of the papers over the course of the semester.

The **research question** (1 page) should: 1) clearly identify the topic you wish to examine, 2) state why you think this issue is important, and 3) state your proposed explanation.

The **bibliography and outline** (1 page each) serve as a road map of the direction your paper is taking; the outline should be broken down by sections briefly explaining what you plan to discuss; and the preliminary

bibliography should include a list of sources and one-sentence annotations explaining their relevance to the project

E-mail/Communication

I will be using the IU Canvas system to post the syllabus, readings, and grades. Please let me know if you are having any trouble using and accessing this system. If you need to communicate, please use e-mail and not Canvas.

I am available to answer questions both by email and in person during office hours. Email is a form of professional communication, and you should adopt practices now that you will use in your future career. I tend to respond to emails fairly quickly, but if I have not addressed your question by the next class period, please ask me in person.

I will hold regular office hours every week and make separate appointments for those students who are unavailable during office hours. I will do my best to accommodate all such requests, and to meet with students in order to answer any questions they may have about the class.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated according to the following rubric:

Attendance and participation: 10%

Midterm: 25%

Final exam: 25%

Research paper: 40% (10% research question; 10% bibliography and outline; 20% final product)

Letter Grades

97.0+ = A+	93.0-96.9 = A	90.0-92.9 = A-
87.0-89.9 = B+	83.0-86.9 = B	80.0-82.9 = B-
77.0-79.9 = C+	73.0-76.9 = C	70.0-72.9 = C-
67.0-69.9 = D+	63.0-66.9 = D	60.0-62.9 = D-
Below 60 = F		

What do these letter grades signify? Remember that Y383 is organized around a series of debates on political issues. Knowing which ideas prevailed in these debates is enough to earn some sort of C in Y383. To earn a B of some sort, students must be able to compare ideas and the arguments used to advance them in debate. To earn an A of some sort, students must be able to analyze arguments and explain why one or another argument is superior, even though it might be deficient in some respects.

For example, in 1787 Federalists favored the formation of a union and their views prevailed. A student who knew what the Federalists meant by “union” and could say why they favored it would earn a C on an essay question about this issue. A student who could also say why Antifederalists opposed union and who is therefore able to reconstruct the ratification controversy would earn a B. A student who could reconstruct that debate and assess the quality of Federalist and Antifederalist arguments would earn an A. This requires more than knowing what each side said; it also requires knowing how each side tried to rebut the other’s arguments, and with what success.

If you disagree with your grades on an assignment or would like to discuss it further, I would be happy to do so. If you would like me to adjust your grade, you need to explain why, and must approach me outside of normal class time.

Important Dates

September 16: Research Question Due
October 12: Midterm
October 19: Outline and Bibliography Due
December 9: Final Papers Due
December 14: Final Exam

Academic Honesty

As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the [Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct](#). When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is all yours, unless otherwise cited or referenced. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged. If you are unsure about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or exam, be sure to seek clarification beforehand.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be treated severely. I will assign a zero for the exam, quiz or assignment in question, and I may not permit offenders to continue in the course. I will also initiate University disciplinary proceedings and pursue them to a conclusion. Further sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment, reduction in your final course grade, a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities.

Several commercial services have approached students regarding selling class notes/study guides to their classmates. Please be advised that selling a faculty member's notes/study guides individually or on behalf of one of these services using IU email, Canvas, or Oncourse violates both IU information technology and IU intellectual property policy. Selling notes/study guides to fellow students in this course is not permitted. Violations of this policy will be considered violations of the *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct* and will be reported to the Dean of Students as a violation of course rules (academic misconduct). Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment for which the notes/study guides are being sold, a reduction in your final course grade, a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities.

Students with Disabilities

Any students with a disability will be accorded any additional assistance and/or time for completing assignments and exams. Students requesting disability related assistance must provide documentation establishing the presence of a substantially limiting condition(s) and describing its current impact and be registered with the [Office of Disability Services for Students](#). Please let me know if you fall into this category and will require any assistance.

Course Schedule

Week 1: The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution

- Monday, Aug. 24: Course introduction
- Wednesday, Aug. 26: James I, [Divine Right of Kings](#)
The Levellers, [Agreement of the Free People of England](#)
John Locke, [Second Treatise of Civil Government](#), Ch. 7, 9, 19
[English Bill of Rights of 1689](#)

Week 2: Ideological Origins, contd.

- Monday, Aug. 31: [The Mayflower Compact](#)
[Massachusetts Body of Liberties](#)
John Winthrop, [On Liberty](#)
William Penn, [Charter of Libertie](#)
William Penn, [The Excellent Priviledge of Liberty and Property](#)
- Wednesday, Sep. 2: NO CLASS

Week 3: Forms of Colonial Government

- Monday, Sep. 7: NO CLASS (Labor Day)
- Wednesday, Sep. 9: [Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England](#)
John Locke, [The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina](#)
[Ordinances for Virginia](#)
[Frame of the Government of Pennsylvania](#)

Week 4: Class, Race, and the Social Order

- Monday, Sep. 14: Nathaniel Bacon, [Declaration of the People](#)
Charles Post, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Colonial British North America" (Canvas)
T.H. Breen, "A Changing Labor Force and Race Relations in Virginia, 1660-1710" (Canvas)
- Wednesday, Sep. 16: David Eltis, "Labour and Coercion in the English Atlantic World"
Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom" (Canvas)
Benjamin Franklin, [A Conversation on Slavery](#)
****Research Questions Due****

Week 5: Revolutionary Stirrings

- Monday, Sep. 21: Jonathan Mayhew, [Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission Albany Plan of Union](#)
Joseph Galloway, [Plan of Union](#)
[Declaration and Resolves on Colonial Rights](#)
[Virginia Declaration of Rights](#)
- Wednesday, Sep. 23: Thomas Paine, [Common Sense](#)
Joseph Chalmers, *Plain Truth* (Canvas)

Week 6: The Declaration of Independence

- Monday, Sep. 28: [Declaration of Independence](#)
Thomas Jefferson, [Rough Draft of the Declaration](#)
[The two texts compared](#)
- Wednesday, Sep. 30: State Constitutions of [Massachusetts](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Virginia](#)

Week 7: A Precarious Union

- Monday, Oct. 5: [Articles of Confederation](#)
[Northwest Ordinance](#)
- Wednesday, Oct. 7: Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, p. 396-429 (Canvas)
James Madison, [Vices of the Political System](#)
John Jay, [Letter to Jefferson](#)
[Continental Congress](#)

Week 8: Debate and Compromise

- Monday, Oct. 12: MIDTERM EXAM
- Wednesday, Oct. 14: [Virginia Plan](#)
[New Jersey Plan](#)
[Hamilton Plan](#)
[The Great Compromise](#)
[Constitution of the United States](#)

Week 9: Arguing the Constitution

- Monday, Oct. 19: [The Federalist](#) 1, 2, 6, 9, 10
[Federal Farmer](#) I, II
[Brutus](#) I
****Outline and Bibliography Due****
- Wednesday, Oct. 21: Federalist [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [23](#)
Brutus [V](#), [VI](#), [VII](#), [VIII](#)
Patrick Henry, [Balanced Government](#)

Week 10: A Federal Republic

- Monday, Oct. 26: Federalist [37](#), [39](#), [47](#), [48](#), [49](#), [51](#)
Federal Farmer [III](#), [XVII](#)
Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Book II (entire), Book VIII Ch. 16
- Wednesday, Oct. 28: James Madison, [Letter to Jefferson](#)
Thomas Jefferson, [Letter to Madison](#)
Patrick Henry, [Federal v. Consolidated Government](#)

Week 11: Political Representation

- Monday, Nov. 2: [Federalist](#) [52](#), [54](#), [56](#), [57](#)
Brutus [III](#), [IV](#)
Federal Farmer [IX](#), [X](#)
- Wednesday, Nov. 4: [Federalist](#) [62](#), [63](#)
Brutus [XVI](#)
Federal Farmer [XI](#)
Melancton Smith, [Representation](#)

Week 12: The Executive and Judiciary

- Monday, Nov. 9: Federalist [68, 70, 71, 73, 74](#)
Brutus [IX, X](#)
Federal Farmer [XIII, XIV](#)
- Wednesday, Nov. 11: Federalist [78, 79, 80](#)
Brutus [XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV](#)
Federal Farmer [IV, V](#)

Week 13: Rights, Liberties, Citizenship

- Monday, Nov. 16: [The Bill of Rights](#)
[Federalist 84, 85](#)
[Brutus II](#)
James Madison, [Letter to Jefferson](#)
- Wednesday, Nov. 18: [An Act Respecting Alien Enemies](#)
[An Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes](#)
Virginia Resolution, [Alien and Sedition Acts](#)
Kentucky Resolution, [Alien and Sedition Acts](#)

Week 14: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 15: Old Ideas and New Beginnings

- Monday, Nov. 30: Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People* p. 263-287 (Canvas)
Thomas Jefferson, [Letter to Kercheval](#)
- Wednesday, Dec. 2: Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* p. 141-178, 248-255 (Canvas)

Week 16: Liberalism and Republicanism Reconsidered

- Monday, Dec. 7: Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Canvas), selection TBA
Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* p. 46-70 (Canvas)
- Wednesday, Dec. 9: Course Summary
****Research Paper Due****

Week 17

- Monday, Dec. 14: FINAL EXAM

Useful Resources

The Founder's Constitution, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/tocs/toc.html>. Provides background and commentary on each clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The Constitution Society, <http://constitution.org/>. Archive of primary texts from American constitutional history.

[The Federalist](#) (The classic Gideon edition, including a Reader's Guide)