



American Political Thought

Professor Nicholas Tampio

Fordham University, Fall 2018, POSC 3404

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Class hours: Dealy Hall 101, TF 10-11:15 am

Office hours: T 2-4pm

Course Overview

Contemporary debates in American politics often revolve around a few basic questions: What are the greatest problems facing America? What does it mean to be an American? What are the principles of American politics? Americans often answer these questions by drawing upon seminal texts in American political thought. The aim of this course is to study several of these texts so that we may participate more thoughtfully and effectively in contemporary politics.

Throughout the course, we test each author's ideas by how well they help us grasp contemporary issues in American politics, including presidential elections, Social Security reform, property rights, immigration policy, the role of religion in politics, and sports and entertainment. Students are encouraged to follow current events in American politics by reading the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Economist*, and other journals and newspapers.

Student learning objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Know the main contours of the history of American political thought.
- Be familiar with key arguments about, for instance, whether the founders envisioned the country as a democracy or a republic.
- Understand how to use the American political thought archive to intervene in a contemporary political debate.

Texts

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, *The Federalist* (Liberty Fund) 9780865972896

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (University of Chicago Press) 0226805360

WEB DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Norton) 039397393X

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (Free Press) 0684833271

John Dewey, *Public and its Problems* (Swallow Press) 0804011664

James Buchanan, *The Calculus of Consent* (Liberty Fund) 0865972184

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press) 9780674000780

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Greywolf Press) 1555976905

Course Requirements

(1-2). Students have a chance to write and present a research paper on one of the authors we discuss this semester. Early in the semester, I will assign students to a group. On the day your group leads discussion, each student will turn in to me, and present to the class with a Powerpoint, a 2000 word research project on how the author helps us grasp contemporary politics. A good essay will include citations to recent news articles as well as a few scholarly sources.

(3) The midterm is on Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Tocqueville, and DuBois. A week beforehand, I will distribute 6 essay questions, and on the day of the exam we will roll a die to determine 2 questions. Well-written essays should incorporate material from the lectures, readings, presentations, and your own thoughts. You may study in groups, but the exam is close-booked. The exam is 1 hour.

(4) The final has the same format as the midterm, and is on Lippmann, Dewey, Buchanan, Rawls, and Rankine.

(5) Class participation. Students are expected to come to class on time prepared to discuss the readings. I employ the Socratic method in the classroom, which means that I will often call on you even if your hands are down; be ready! Students are expected to read, listen, observe, and think actively rather than passively.

Grade Distribution

Research paper	20
Research presentation	10
Midterm	20
Final exam	40
Class participation	10

To understand university policies on academic rights and responsibilities, sexual harassment, services for students with disabilities, and other important topics, please see the [undergraduate faculty handbook](#).

Class schedule

I. The Founding

1. August 31: No class. I'll be at the American Political Science Association meeting in Boston.
2. September 4: The Declaration
 - Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" in *The Federalist*
3. September 7: Hamilton and the Strong Federal Government
 - Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist*, 1, 9, 15, 23, 35, 84
4. September 11: Madison and Restrained Power
 - James Madison, *The Federalist*, 10, 39, 51, 54, 55
5. September 14: Sam Haselby will speak on the religious beliefs of the American founders.

- [American Secular](#) (2016)
6. September 17: Native Americans on the Founding
- William Apess, "[Eulogy on King Philip](#)" (1836)

II. Alexis de Tocqueville on American Mores

7. September 21: On American Identity
- *Democracy in America*: Vol. I: Author's Introduction, Part I, Chs. 2, 3
8. September 25: On Democratic Republicanism
- *Democracy in America*: Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 9
9. September 28: On American Individualism
- *Democracy in America*: Volume II, Part II (entire)
10. October 2: Student Presentations

III. Frederick Douglas on Bondage and Freedom

11. October 5: Double Consciousness
- *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of our Spiritual Strivings"
12. October 9: Black leadership
- *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of the Training of Black Men"
13. October 12: Student Presentations
14. October 16: Anindya Purakayastha will visit Fordham to discuss his research on trans-cultural attempts of global solidarity.
- BR Ambedkar, [Annihilation of Caste](#)

15. October 19: Midterm

IV. Lippmann and Dewey on Democracy and Expertise

16. October 26: Thinking in Stereotypes
- *Public Opinion*, Introduction, Parts 3, 6
17. October 30: The Entering Wedge
- *Public Opinion*, Part 8
18. November 2: The Public
- *The Public and its Problems*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 4
19. November 6: The Role of Experts
- *The Public and its Problems*, Chapters 5, 6
20. November 9: Student Presentations

IV. James Buchanan on the Calculus of Consent

21. November 13: The Individualistic Postulate
- *The Calculus of Consent*, Parts I, II
22. November 16: The Economics and Ethics of Democracy
- *The Calculus of Consent*, Part IV
23. November 20: Student Presentations

VI. John Rawls on Justice as Fairness

24. November 27: The Idea of Justice as Fairness,
• *A Theory of Justice*, Chapter I, §§1-4; Chapter IV §40
25. November 30: The Original Position and Reflective Equilibrium
• *A Theory of Justice*, Chapter II, §§11-17, Chapter III
26. December 4: Student Presentations

VII. Claudia Rankine on the Racial Imaginary

27. December 7: The Racial Imaginary
• *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Two students will lead discussion)

Final Exam: Friday, December 14, 9:30 am