Course Description

_"O, let America be America again-
The land that never has been yet--"
--Langston Hughes

This course will examine a selection of important texts that have helped shape and contest the political idea—and the political ideals—of America, placing particular emphasis on the dissenting traditions of American political thought. Beginning with a sermon delivered to Puritans on their way to the “New World,” and ending with a seminal debate between John Dewey and Walter Lippman over the very possibility of democratic self-rule in the modern age, the course will emphasize how intellectual argument in America has shaped—and been shaped by—the larger political culture of which it is a part. We will study works that are not only rewarding to think about, in other words, but also rewarding to think with in light of persistent dilemmas and conflicts in American politics. With this goal in mind, we will often pair historical source material with contemporary works of political theory that will help us engage their continued political relevance. We will place particular emphasis on four significant periods in American political history: Puritan New England, the Revolution and Founding, Abolition and Civil War, and the Progressive Era.

Course Requirements

This is an advanced political theory research seminar. Every student should come to class prepared to engage in lively conversation based on the week’s reading. Grades will be based on a research paper (20-25 page) due at the semester’s end (65%), a short (7-8 page) written response to one week’s reading (15%), a 10-15 minute oral discussion of another student’s written response (10%), and general seminar participation (10%). Written responses will be circulated electronically no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Monday before seminar meets. These papers should provide a close and critical account
of the week’s reading, focusing on one or two central issues or questions. Written responses are meant to provoke seminar discussion, so please avoid summary and feel free to be (thoughtfully) contentious. The papers must include direct citation of the reading discussed (with notes), and engage some of the recommended reading (I am happy to discuss the recommended works most relevant to the student’s interests). Each seminar will begin with another student’s 10-15 discussion of the written response. These oral presentations should also avoid summary and instead pose a series of textually supported critical questions that can facilitate a broader seminar discussion. A sign-up sheet for both presentations and discussions will be posted on my office door.

Books to Purchase (available at Cornell Bookstore)

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*
Terence Ball, ed., *The Federalist Papers*
John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*
W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*
Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*
Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*
David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition I*
Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other*
Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists were For*
Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*

Material marked “*” available on Blackboard.
Material marked “**” in *The American Intellectual Tradition*.

Weekly Readings

**Week 1: Introduction: Liberalism, Exceptionalism, and the Stories We Tell**

Wednesday, August 26th:

Michael Rogin, “American Political Demonology: A Retrospective”*
Dorothy Ross, “Liberalism”*
Hegel, *Lectures on World History*
Louis Hartz, “The Concept of a Liberal Society”*
Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History (Selection)*
Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville”*

Recommended:

Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*
David Campbell, “Imagining America”
John P. Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics*
Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*
Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*
Wilson Cary McWilliams, *The Idea of Fraternity in America*
Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*
Judith Shklar, *American Citizenship*
Michael Walzer, *What It Means to Be an American*
Robet H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*
James P. Young, *American Liberalism: The Troubled Odyssey of the Liberal Idea*

**Week 2: Community, Theology, and Dissent in Colonial New England**

Wednesday, September 2nd:

Anne Hutchinson, “The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newton.”*
David S. Lovejoy, “Anne Hutchinson and the Naked Christ”*
Perry Miller, “The Puritan Way of Life”*


Recommended:

Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*
Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity*
Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*
Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794*
David Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*
Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and the Restoration of Mary Rowlandson*

**Week 3: Fashioning the Modern American Self**

Wednesday, September 9th:

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (1784-1788)

Recommended:

Alan Houston, *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement*
Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*
D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
Wilfred M. McClay, *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America*

**Week 4: Revolution and “the People”**

Wednesday, September 16th:

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (1776)**
Jacques Derrida, “Declarations of Independence”*

Recommended:

Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence*
Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*
Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*
Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America*
Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, eds., *A Companion to the American Revolution*
Larry Kramer, *The People Themselves: Popular Constitutionalism and Judicial Review*
Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*
Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People*
Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *The Violent Empire: The Birth of American National identity*
Sheldon Wolin, “The People’s Two Bodies”
Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*

**Week 5: Founding: The Great National Discussion and the Nation State**

Wednesday, September 23rd:

*The Federalist Papers*

Recommended:

Bruce Ackerman, *We the People, Volume 1: Foundations*
Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*
Lance Banning, *Sacred Fire of Liberty*
Jason Frank, *Publius and Political Imagination*
Isaac Kramnick, “The Great National Discussion”: The Discourse of Politics in 1787,”  
*William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (1988), 3-33
Richard K. Mathews, *If Men were Angels: Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason*
Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art: The Cultural Origins of the Constitution*
Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*
Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*

**Week 6: Anti-Federalists and the Dissenting Tradition**

Wednesday, September 30th:

Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists were For*
“Essays of Brutus” included in Ball’s edition of *The Federalist Papers*
Sheldon Wolin, “Contract and Birthright”*
Sheldon Wolin, “E Pluribus Unum”*

Recommended:

Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition, 1788-1828*
Suzette Hemberger, “A Government Based on Representations”
Celia Kenyon, *Men of Little Faith*
Jackson Turner Main, *The Anti-federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788*
Robert Martin, *Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic*
Sheldon Wolin, *The Presence of the Past*

**Week 7: Expansion and Settler Empire**

Wednesday, October 7th: Class must be rescheduled this week.

William Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip”*
Chief Joseph, “An Indian’s View of Indian Affairs”*
Michael Rogin, “Liberal Society and the Indian Question.”*
Alexis de Tocqueville, “The Present and Probable Future Condition of the Three Races that Inhabit the Territory of the United States”*
Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Frontier and American History”*

Recommended:

Joseph L Blau, ed., *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy*
Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*
Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom*
**Week 8: Transcendentalism and the Imperial Self**

Wednesday, October 14th:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*
Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*

Recommended

Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*
Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*
George Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance*
George Kateb, *The Inner Ocean: Individualism and Democratic Culture*
Alan Levine and Daniel Malachuk, eds., *A Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*
David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*
Robert D. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*
Jack Turner, ed., *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau*

**Week 9: Abolition and White Supremacy**

Wednesday, October 21st:

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”**
>Dredd Scott v Sandford
George Fitzhugh, *A Sociology for the South**
Jason Frank, “Staging Dissensus: Frederick Douglass and ‘We the People’”**
Melvin Rogers, “David Walker and the Political Power of the Appeal”**
David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*

Recommended:

Eddie Glaude, *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*
Karen Fields and Barbara Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Society*
Robert Fanuzzi, *Abolition’s Public Sphere*
Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*
Mason Lowance, ed., *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader*
Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*
John Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*
**Week 10: Lincoln and Union**

Wednesday, October 28th:


Recommended:

Paul M. Angle, ed., *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates*
Harry Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*
George Kateb, *Lincoln’s Political Thought*
Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*

**Week 11: Capitalism, Social Darwinism, Labor Republicanism**

Wednesday, November 4th:

William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other*
Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*

Recommended:

Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*
Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise; The Populist Movement in America*
Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture & Society in the Gilded Age*

**Week 12: Race and the Rebirth of a Nation**

Wednesday, November 11th:

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (film screening)
Melvin Rogers, “The People, Rhetoric, and Affect: On the Political Force of Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*”

Recommended:

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity*
Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy’s Reconstruction: Thinking Politically with W.E.B. Du Bois*
Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in*
**America**
Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*
Adolph Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*
Michael Rogin, “‘The Sword Became a Flashing Vision’”

**Week 13: Emma Goldman and American Radicalism**

Wednesday, November 18th:

Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*
Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics*

Recommended:

Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*
Candace Falk, *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History*
Kathy Ferguson, *Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets*
Don Herzog, “Romantic Anarchism and Pedestrian Liberalism”
Lori Marso, “The Perversions of Bored Liberals: A Response to Herzog”
Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger, eds., *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*

**Week 14: No Class Thanksgiving**

**Week 15: Progressives and the Fate of Democracy**

Wednesday, December 2nd:

John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*
Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*

Recommended:

Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*
Eldon Eisenach, ed., *Social and Political Thought of American Progressivism*
Andrew Feffer, *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*
James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in American and European Social Thought*
R. Jeffrey Lustig, *Corporate Liberalism: The Origins of Modern American Political Theory, 1890-1920*
Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*
Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*
Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*