

American Political Thought: From Civil War to Civil Rights

Professor Houston

Spring 1999

Course Description

What is America's identity as a nation, and what does it mean to be an American? According to the Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights"; according to the preamble to the Constitution, the government of the United States was ordained and established by "the people." But as acrimonious debates and violent struggles quickly demonstrated, these canonical formulations provoked as many questions as they answered. What is freedom? Equality? Self-government? What social practices and political institutions hinder or advance these goals? Between 1860 and 1964 Americans struggled to answer these questions, conscious of the fact that they lived in a world unlike that of the Founding Fathers. Slavery had ended, the continent had been settled, machine industry had arisen, political parties had been formed, a powerful national government had been created, extensive involvement in international affairs had proven unavoidable. Through a careful study of a variety of primary sources—ranging from political pamphlets and philosophical treatises to court decisions and works of literature—this course seeks to introduce students to some of the most important debates over ideals, institutions, and identity that took place in America between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. In so doing it seeks to illuminate a number of enduring themes in American political thought, from the nature of representation and purpose of economic organization to the significance of race and gender and the relationship between individual and community.

Requirements

1. Participation in the PS 110eb virtual discussion section. Each student must post at least three messages during the quarter; at least one must be dated on or before 12 April, and at least one must be dated after 12 April. (5% of grade)
2. Participation in one of three in-class debates, held 9 April, 12 and 21 May. You will be asked to sign-up for one of these debates during the first week of class. Debate guidelines will be distributed in advance. (10% of grade)
3. Two four-to-five page (1,000 – 1,2500 word) papers; the first paper is due 23 April, the second on 14 May. Paper topics and paper-writing guidelines will be distributed in advance. (30% of grade each).
4. A two-hour final examination, to be given Tuesday, 8 June. Examination topics and guidelines will be distributed in advance. (25% of grade)

Books Recommended for Purchase

The following books are available at the University Bookstore:

Mark Twain, *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folks*

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

All other readings are contained in a sourcebook available from Cal Copy (8657 Villa La Jolla Dr.). Many texts for this course are also available on the Internet at (<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~ahouston/ps110eb/etexts.htm>).

Additional Information

1. My office is SSB 373. My phone number is 534-2951; my email address is ahouston@ucsd.edu. My office hours for Spring 1999 are on Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:00; I am also available by appointment.
2. Visit PS 110eb on the web at <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~ahouston/ps110eb/home.htm>. This site includes course information, an electronic sourcebook, links to related web sites, and a virtual discussion section.
3. There are many provocative and engaging books on American political thought between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. If you would like suggestions for further readings, please do not hesitate to ask.

Reading Assignments and Course Schedule

1. Inheritance (29 March – 9 April)

The Declaration of Independence (<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~ahouston/texts/Declaration-of-Independence.htm>)

Frederick Douglass

“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)

Abraham Lincoln

“Emancipation Proclamation” (1863)

“Address at Gettysburg” (1863)

“Address to Washington Temperance Society” (1842)

Mark Twain

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889), chs. 1, 2, 4 – 8, 10, 11, 13, 16 – 18, 20 – 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 37 – 44

Debate (9 April)

2. Economic Growth and the Politics of Necessity (12 – 21 April)

William Graham Sumner

“Sociology” (1885)

What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other, chs. 1, 2, 8, 9 (1883)

Lochner v. New York, 198 US 45 (1905)

Thorsten Veblen

The Theory of the Leisure Class, chs. 4, 8 (1899)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

The Yellow Wallpaper (1892)

First paper (due 23 April)

3. Race, Equality, and Identity (23 – 28 April)

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 US 537 (1896)

Booker T. Washington

“Atlanta Exposition Address” (1895)

W.E.B. DuBois

The Souls of Black Folk (1903), pp. chs. 1-3, 6, 8-13

4. Progressives and Radicals (30 April – 12 May)

Jane Addams

Twenty Years at Hull House, chs. 6, 8, 11 (1910)

John Dewey

Democracy and Education, chs. 1 – 8 (1916)

Herbert Croly

The Promise of American Life, chs. 1, 7 (1909)

Eugene Debs

“Unionism and Socialism” (1908)

Debate (12 May)

Second paper (14 May)

5. Democracy and its Limits (14 – 21 May)

Schenck v. United States, 249 US 47 (1919)

Debs v. United States, 249 US 211 (1919)

Abrams v United States, 250 US 616 (1919)

H. L. Mencken

“Government” (1922-29)

“Democracy” (1920-27)

Walter Lippmann

Public Opinion, chs. 1, 6, 16, 17 (1922)

Debate (21 May)

6. Civil Rights (24 – 28 May)

Brown v. Board of Education I, 347 US 483 (1954)

Brown v. Board of Education II, 349 US 294 (1956)

Eugene Cook and William Potter

“The Court Overstepped its Role” (1956)

James F. Byrnes

“The Court Must Be Curbed” (1956)

Herbert Wechsler

“The Court Ignored Neutral Principles” (1959)

Charles L. Black

“The Court Upheld the Constitution” (1960)

Martin Luther King Jr.

“Nonviolence and Racial Justice” (1957)

“Letter from Birmingham City Jail” (1963)

“Hammer on Civil Rights” (1964)

Heart of Atlanta Motel v. US, 379 US 241 (1964)

7. Legacies (2 – 4 June)

Malcolm X

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, ch. 15 (1965)

Betty Friedan

The Feminine Mystique, chs. 1, 6 (1963)

Michael Walzer

“What Does It Mean to be An American?” (1990)

Final Examination (8 June)