POLS 287 John McMahon MWF 1:30-2:35, MI 208 mcmahonja@beloit.edu

Office: MI 214

Office Hours: Mon. 2:45-3:45 / Wed. 2:45-3:45 / Thu. 12:00-1:00 / other times – email me!

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US Political Thought Fall 2017

Course Description

This course is a study of the development of American political ideas, through critical analysis of the writings of intellectuals and political leaders from the American Founding to the present. As our central theme, we will focus on the traditions of American Political Thought (APT) as simultaneously theorizing freedom and liberty on the one hand, and intense, often violent forms of domination on the other, especially domination on the basis of race. Consequently, we will devote time to both classic readings in APT (the Founders, Tocqueville, Lincoln, etc.) and to multiple strands of US political thinking that challenge the dominant narratives of APT. In analyzing the competing traditions of equality and inequality in theory, we will also explore the connections between this theory and practices of equality and inequality.

The course poses several questions:

- What are liberty, equality, freedom, justice, power, inequality, in the American context?
- What is American about US/American Political Thought?
- How do forms of freedom and domination coexist, and what is the relation between them?
- What is the ongoing impact of eighteenth and nineteenth century political thought today?
- How do more recent thinkers respond to, build on, reject, co-opt and/or appropriate earlier APT?
- What does it mean to do American political thinking in the 21st century?
- What is the relationship between American political thinking and political practice?

In exploring these questions, the primary objective of this course is for you to develop your own capacity for political thinking beyond this class alone, as a crucial element in a liberal arts education. This means that responding to, analyzing, critiquing, building on, and connecting the theorists we read is more important than memorizing every detail. It also means that your active citizenship in the course – in the classroom and on the class blog – is essential, and that you should be open to reflecting on and reevaluating your own political thinking (as I will do myself). Our course discussions and writing assignments provide opportunities for practicing your own political thinking in conversation with your peers and with the texts we read.

The class emphasizes textual analysis and class discussion; all students are expected to actively participate in class. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. **Bring the relevant text to class, always!**

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

• Cultivate the capacity for political thinking in its various forms

- Develop a familiarity with central questions, arguments, themes, concepts, and thinkers in American Political Thought
- Approach the history of APT as an ongoing, connected conversation debating enduring questions related to justice, power, freedom, and more
- Develop the ability to critically analyze the relationship between freedom and domination in American political thinking
- Improve skills for close reading and interpretation of complex texts
- Foster abilities for critical thinking, for discussion and debate with peers, and for analytical writing in the classroom and in political life beyond it
- Reexamine assumptions about politics and political life in order to open one's self to new perspective and ways of thinking about the political world in which one is immersed

Evaluation

• Class citizenship: 25%

• Class blog: 25%

• Take-home essays (2 essays at 10% each): 20%

• Class session discussion leader: 10%

• Final paper: 20%

Assignments

- <u>Class citizenship</u> (25% of grade): I care about whether you come to class and the role you play in it; our class will be most rewarding if you attend regularly, and if you are an active citizen. I expect you to come on time, to listen, and to participate. After four absences, the class citizenship component of your grade will decrease. Class citizenship, however, entails more than just showing up, it also means participating in class.
 - O Participation can take many different forms: asking questions about unclear concepts or materials, raising ideas we as a class or the author may have overlooked, respectfully sharing opinions, volunteering to read passages when asked, visiting office hours, contributing to class discussions in large and small groups without monopolizing conversations, paying attention to me and to your classmates, and taking risks when there are questions asked that have no clear answers. Participation does not only mean talking—it also means working to be aware of the space you inhabit and how you can best contribute to an atmosphere of supportive learning.
 - o I understand that speaking in class can be challenging. We will have a number of different kinds of discussions to encourage participation, and you should use the blog as a way of preparing ideas to bring to our class sessions. Regularly coming to office hours and discussing the readings can contribute to your class citizenship grade as well, as does asking questions in class.
 - Last but not least, class citizenship means being receptive of and interested in others' political and philosophical perspectives, respectful of experiences different than your own, and open to having others disagree with you. Disagreement is inevitable in a political theory class (including with me!), and can be incredibly productive so long as it proceeds collegially.
- <u>Class Blog</u> (25% of grade): Throughout the semester, we will write a class blog, using WordPress. During the first week of class, I will lead a brief WordPress tutorial and

distribute instructions on joining WordPress and becoming a member of the blog. <u>You are required to write one post of at least 200 words + 1-3 discussion questions, twice per week.</u>

Posts are due by 7:00am the day of class, on the readings for the upcoming class. If you regularly make substantive comments on others' posts, you will receive extra credit in the blog grade at the end of the semester.

The blog is *not* intended to be a place for you to summarize the readings, but rather to interpret and analyze them. Your blog posts can take many forms: offer a critique of the reading, connect it to contemporary or historical events, relate it to earlier readings in the course, offer a close reading of an especially important or interesting passage, and much more. We will use responses and discussion questions in each class session. A secondary goal of the blog is to familiarize you with the WordPress platform, gaining a skill set relevant for work in the many advocacy groups, organizations, and businesses that use WordPress or similar content management systems/web platforms. In order to encourage you to grapple with difficult ideas and challenge your own views, this will be a private blog visible only to our class.

- <u>Take-Home Essays</u> (2 essays, 10% each; 20% of total grade): You will write two take-home essays over the course of the semester. For each day (not class period) an essay is late, it loses one letter grade. Essays are due 9/18 and 10/13; you will have at least one week with the assignment before it is due.
- Class session discussion leader (10% of grade): Each person will be responsible for leading one class session in the second half of the semester. Classes will be led by pairs of students, and John will jump in to help direct the class as well. You will sign up for the class you will lead in the first month of the semester. You will be required to meet with John and/or Stavia at some point in the week before your class. More details on grading and format will be provided.
- <u>Final paper</u> (**20% of grade**): For your final assignment, you will write a paper of approximately 2500-3000 words. You have three options:
 - A) Choose an American political thinker that we do not discuss in class, and write a
 paper analyzing their theoretical work in relationship to the central themes and
 questions of the course articulated in the course description.
 - o B) Choose a 21st century political phenomenon, and write an essay analyzing how 3-4 people/movements from the course would differently interpret that phenomena.
 - C) There are two possible sections of the course for 11/6-11/29; we will collectively decide between doing "20th and 21st Century Social Movements as American Political Thought" or "Black Political Thought" for that section. For the *set of readings we do not choose*, you can write your final paper on 3-4 of those readings, in relationship to the central themes and questions of the course articulated in the course description.

Texts

The following list of books is required. They are available in the bookstore, and are readily available new and used online. However you acquire the books, please make sure to use the same edition as listed below (this can easily be done by searching by the ISBN number). The

American Political Thought book is also available on 2-hour reserve at the library, and the Brown book is available online through the library

- Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Michael S. Cummings, eds., *American Political Thought*. CQ Press, 5th edition (ISBN 978-1568029139) or 6th edition (ISBN 9780872899728)
 - o Also available on 2-hour reserve at the library
- W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Dover Thrift Edition (ISBN 978-0486280417)
- Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books (ISBN 978-1935408536)
 - o Also available online through the library

Technology

Numerous studies (for example here, here, here, here, here, <a href="here, here, <a href="here, here, <a href="here, <a href="here

Consequently, in general there will be **no phones**, **tablets/iPads**, **or laptops in the classroom**. There are **exceptions** to this rule. **Most importantly, if you have a documented need or accommodation to use an electronic device in class, you are more than welcome to do so.** Additionally, when I lecture, anyone is welcome to take notes on an electronic device, but it should be put away for class conversations, small group work, etc. If you think that using such a device beyond lectures is essential to your success in the course, come talk to me about it. Finally, when we discuss Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos* at the end of the semester, you are welcome to bring a device in, since the book is available online through the library catalog.

Because we will not be utilizing screens in the classroom, you need to bring a hard copy of the texts to every class, including the PDFs we are reading. If you would like to partner with one other person to alternate printing out PDFs between you, that is fine with me so long as there is one printed copy for every two people in class, and so long as you bring notes on the reading to class.

This policy is open to revision as the semester unfolds.

Disability Accommodations and Tutoring

If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), <u>608-</u>3632572, <u>learning@beloit.edu</u> or make an appointment through <u>joydeleon.youcanbook.me</u>. For accommodations in my class, you are to bring me an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the

Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.

Writing Advising

The Writing Center has student writers who are trained tutors ready to work with you collaboratively on any stage of your writing in this class--from brainstorming to final editing. It's a friendly and supportive place, and their goal is to help you to improve your writing and become a better writer. You can make an appointment here: Writing Center Appointments.

Policy on Inclusivity at Beloit College

Inclusivity is a demonstration of equity and social justice through awareness, understanding, and respect for the differences in identity, culture, background, experience, and socialization, and the ways in which these forms of difference impact how we live and learn. Inclusivity requires equitable, institution-wide representation and access to resources. In practice, this manifests itself by each individual being aware of, committed to, and responsible for the well-being and care of all students, staff, and faculty.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

Academic misconduct and dishonesty are serious offenses. Such acts violate the trust that forms the foundation of the student-teacher relationship, they rob students of opportunities to learn, and they damage the reputation of the College as a whole. In particular, plagiarism constitutes intellectual theft and is completely unacceptable. I expect that you will follow Beloit's policy on academic honesty printed in the Student Handbook. Any assignments or exams that violate this policy will receive a failing grade. I will also notify the Dean of Students of any cases of academic dishonesty, and she will determine any further penalties.

Other course policies and notes

- If a student has a desired name that is not listed on my course roster, please let me know. Students may also notify me of their preferred gender pronouns. I use he/him/his pronouns.
- Check your email regularly.
- I strongly encourage you to come visit my office hours; if the times listed don't work, email me so we can figure out another time to meet.
- If you are struggling with any aspect of the course, talk to me sooner rather than later so we can work on the ways to best help you. Please also consider requesting a Peer Tutor, working with the Writing Center, or seeking assistance from Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.
- If a religious holiday that you observe conflicts with an assignment, please let me know in advance so that we may discuss alternate options.

READING SCHEDULE

Subject to changes, which will be announced in class and over e-mail. When there are multiple readings assigned, please read in the order listed below.

I have included the reading list for both possible sections of the course from 11/6—11/29; we will decide collectively which of the two sections to make part of the class.

I. American Political Thought: Foundations

Aug. 28: Welcome and introductions

Aug. 30: Liberalism, American-style

- Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (1955), excerpts
- Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic (1969), excerpts

<u>Sept. 1</u> (ONLINE CLASS; will not meet in-person, John away at conference)

The Religious Structure of US Political Rhetoric?

• Andrew R. Murphy, "Longing, Nostalgia, and Golden Age Politics: The American Jeremiad and the Power of the Past," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009) [5]

Sept. 4: Hierarchy and the American ideal

- Rogers Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America" (1993), excerpts
- Ibram X. Kendi, "Sacrificing Black Lives for the American Lie" (2017), *New York Times*, https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/06/24/opinion/sunday/philando-castile-police-shootings.html

Sept. 6: W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought

• W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Forethought, chaps. I-II

Sept. 8: DuBois II

• DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, chaps. III-VI

Sept. 11: DuBois III

• DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, chaps. VII-VIII

Sept. 13: DuBois IV

• DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, chaps. IX-XI

Sept. 15: DuBois V

- DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chaps. XII-Afterthought
- W.E.B. DuBois on Confederate monuments (1931) and on Robert E. Lee (1928)

Sept. 18

- Essay I due
- In-class: lecture on early US political history (no reading)

II. Revolutionary and Constitutional Political Thought

Sept. 20: Revolution

- Samuel Adams (APT)
- Thomas Paine (APT)
- Declaration of Independence (APT)

Sept. 22: The Not-so-Revolutionary Revolution

- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States (2014), pp. 67-80
- Robert Parkinson, "Did A Fear of Slave Revolts Drive American Independence?" (2016), New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/opinion/did-a-fear-of-slave-revolts-drive-american-independence.html

• Howard Zinn A People's History of the United States (1980), chap. 5, "A Kind of Revolution"

Sept. 25: Constitutions, Iroquois and American

- US Constitution and Bill of Rights (APT 68-79)
- Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois Nation, excerpts (APT; listed under B. Franklin)
- New York Times, "Iroquois Constitution: A Forerunner to Colonists' Democratic Principles,"
 http://www.nytimes.com/1987/06/28/us/iroquois-constitution-a-forerunner-to-colonists-democratic-principles.html

Sept. 27: Debating the Constitution: Federalists

- James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Papers, excerpts (APT)
 - o Read: "In Favor of Adopting the Constitution," Federalist 10, Federalist 39, Federalist 51, Federalist 15, Federalist 23

Sept. 29: Debating the Constitutions: Antifederalists

- Richard Henry Lee's Letters from the Federal Farmer (1787) (APT)
- Brutus No. 2 (1787)
- Brutus No. 5 (1787)
- Melancton Smith, "Speech in the New York Ratifying Convention, June 21, 1788"

Oct. 2: Alexander Hamilton in the 21st century

- playlist of select songs from Hamilton musical
- Alex Nichols, "You Should Be Terrified that People Who Like 'Hamilton' Run Our Country" (2016)
 Current Affairs, https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/07/you-should-be-terrified-that-people-who-like-hamilton-run-our-country
- Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Linda Medcalf, "The Dark Side of the Constitution," in *The Case Against the Constitution: From the Anti-Federalists to the Present* (1987)

III. The American Individual in American Democracy

Oct. 4: Alexis de Tocqueville on American Democracy

• Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/1840), excerpts

Oct. 6: Tocqueville II

• Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/1840), excerpts

Oct. 9: Tocqueville III

• Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/1840), excerpts

Oct. 11: The Transcendental Individual

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1841), excerpts
- Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1848), excerpts (APT)

Oct. 13: NO CLASS (John away at conference)

Essay II due

Fall Break

IV. Slavery in American Political Thought

This section includes readings that describe racialized violence and sexual abuse in detail, and that present racist pro-slavery ideologies. If you have concerns about these readings that you would like to discuss with me in private, please feel free to talk to me during office hours.

Oct. 23: American Slavery: Frederick Douglass

- Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852)
- Douglass, "Speech at the Anti-Slavery Association" (1848) and "Various Phases of Anti-Slavery" (1855) (*APT*)
- Douglass, "To My Old Master, Thomas Auld" (1855),

Oct. 25: American Slavery II

- Angela Davis, Women, Race, and Class (1981), chap. 1 "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood" (Moodle)
- Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death (1982), pp. viii-ix and 2-9

Oct. 27: American Slavery III: The Ideology of the Slave-owner

- Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (1785), excerpt
- John C. Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government (1848) (APT)
- George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All! (1857) (APT)

Oct. 30: American Slavery IV: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

- Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois" (1838)
- Lincoln addresses/speeches, APT

Nov. 1: NO CLASS (Advising Practicum)

Nov. 3: American Slavery V: Reconstruction

- Watch Ava Duvernay's documentary 13th (2016) on Netflix before class
 - o John will hold an optional class viewing at 7:30pm on Nov. 1 in MI 213 you can either join for that or watch on your own
- Reconstruction Amendments (APT)

V.

20th-21st Century Social Movements as American Political Thought OR

Black Political Thought

(see end of the syllabus; to be decided collectively by the class)

Nov. 6:

Nov. 8:

Nov. 10:

Nov. 13:

Nov. 15: NO CLASS (International Symposium Day)

Nov. 17:

Nov. 20:

Nov. 22: ONLINE CLASS; will not meet in person

Nov. 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

Nov. 27:

Nov. 29:

VI. Neoliberalism and 21st Century APT

Dec. 1: Wendy Brown and the Critique of Neoliberalism

• Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (2015), pp. 9-11 and chap. 1

Dec. 4: Brown II

- Brown, Undoing the Demos, chap. 3
- optional: Brown, Undoing the Demos, chap. 2

Dec. 6: Brown III

- Brown, Undoing the Demos, chap. 4
- optional: Brown, Undoing the Demos, chap. 5

Dec. 8: Brown IV

• Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, chap. 6 and Epilogue

Dec. 11: Neoliberalism and Black Politics

- Siddhant Issar, "Listening to Black Lives Matter: 'Racial Capitalism' and Critiques of Neoliberalism," article manuscript draft (2017)
- Interview with Lester Spence on neoliberalism and black politics, *Always Already Podcast* (2016), https://alwaysalreadypodcast.wordpress.com/2016/03/15/spence/

Dec. 13: NO CLASS (work day)

TUESDAY DECEMBER 19, 5pm: FINAL DUE

OUTLINES FOR SECTION V.

V. Black Political Thought

Nov. 6: Black Political Thought, an Introduction

- Derrick A. Bell, "Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?," University of Illinois Law Review (1995)
- Robin D.G. Kelley, Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination (2002), Introduction

Nov. 8: James Baldwin I

- Baldwin, "The American Dream and the American Negro" (1965)
- Baldwin, "We Can Change the Country"
- Baldwin, "My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation" (1962)

Nov. 10: James Baldwin II

- Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village"
- Baldwin, "The White Problem"
- Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt"

Nov. 13: Civil Rights, 1963-64

• Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter From A Birmingham City Jail," (1963) (APT)

- Fannie Lou Hamer, "Speech before the Democratic National Convention Credentials Committee" (1964), http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fannielouhamercredentialscommittee.htm
- Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution" (1964), http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.ca/2013/07/the-black-revolution-april-8-1964.html (read through speech; optional to read his responses to questions)

Nov. 15: NO CLASS (International Symposium Day)

Extra Credit: Watch and write review of I Am Not Your Negro (2016)

Nov. 17: Black Feminism I

- Combahee River Collective Statement (1983) (Moodle)
- bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," Feminist Theory (1984) (Moodle)

Nov. 20: Black Feminism II

• Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought (2000), chaps. 1 and 2

Nov. 22: ONLINE CLASS; will not meet in person

Angela Davis and Prison Abolition

• Angela Y. Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete?, chaps. 1 and 6

Nov. 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

Nov. 27: Afro-pessimism

- Jared Sexton, "Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts," Lateral 1 (2012)
- Christina Sharpe, "Response," *Lateral* 1 (2012)

Nov. 29: #BlackLivesMatter

• The Movement For Black Lives, *Platform* (2016), https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/

OR

V. 20th-21st Century Social Movements as American Political Thought

Nov. 6: Anarchist Feminism: Emma Goldman

- Emma Goldman, "Anarchism" (1907) and "The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation" (1910), APT
- Emma Goldman, "The Traffic in Women" (1910), excerpts

Nov. 8: Civil Rights

- Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter From A Birmingham City Jail," (1963) (APT)
- Fannie Lou Hamer, "Speech before the Democratic National Convention Credentials Committee" (1964), http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fannielouhamercredentialscommittee.htm
- Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution" (1964), http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.ca/2013/07/the-black-revolution-april-8-1964.html (read through speech; optional to read his responses to questions)

Nov. 10: The Young Lords

• The Young Lords Reader, ed. Enck-Wanzer, "Young Lords Platform and Rules," "The Ideology of the Young Lords Party," and "Young Lords Party Position Paper on Women"

Nov. 13: Black Feminism

- Combahee River Collective Statement (1983)
- bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," Feminist Theory (1984)

Nov. 15: NO CLASS (International Symposium Day)

Extra Credit: Watch and write review of Black Power Mixtape, 1967-75 (2011)

Nov. 17: Feminisms

- Betty Friedan, "Our Revolution is Unique" (1968) (APT 450-455)
- June Jordan, "On the Politics of Change" (1997) (APT 522-528)
- Cathleen McGuire and Collen McGuire, "Ecofeminist Visions" (1991/1993/2004) (APT 512-518)

Nov. 20: Queer Politics

- Siobhan Somerville, "Queer," Keywords for American Cultural Studies (2007)
- Anonymous Queers, Queers Read This (1990)
- Eric A. Stanley, Dean Spade, and Queer (In)Justice, "Queering Prison Abolition, Now?", *American Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2012)

Nov. 22: ONLINE CLASS; will not meet in person

Native Activism

- American Indian Movement, "Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Manifesto, 20-Point Position Paper" (1972), https://www.aimovement.org/ggc/trailofbrokentreaties.html
- Winona LaDuke, *Native Struggle for Land and Life* (1999) (APT 539-542)
- Kelly Hayes, "How to Talk About #NoDAPL: A Native Perspective" (2016), *Transformative Spaces*, https://transformativespaces.org/2016/10/27/how-to-talk-about-nodapl-a-native-perspective/

Nov. 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

Nov. 27: #BlackLivesMatter

• The Movement For Black Lives, *Platform* (2016), https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/

Nov. 29: Conservativism

- Phyllis Schlafly, The Power of the Positive Woman (1977), excerpt
- Patrick Buchanan, *The Great Betrayal* (1998) (APT 528-534)
- Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservativism," *Perspectives on Politics* 9 (2011)