This course presents some fundamental ideas that underlie the American political order. These ideas spring from numerous sources, the most important of which are republicanism, democracy, and liberalism. In some ways these currents merge and flow together, in other ways they diverge, become antagonistic and act against one another. Some observers point out that this political order is basically liberal, exemplified by the fundamental principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. Others point to elements antithetical to liberal thought. The Declaration itself may be seen as a locus of political and intellectual contestation open to divergent interpretations.

Republican thought rests upon the ideas of non-domination and autonomy, while democratic thought emphasizes the primacy of self-government by the people, and liberalism underscores the values of individualism and tolerance. Thus American political thought may be seen as a bundle of ideas and concepts which are simultaneously the cause and product of an on-going and contentious debate regarding the very nature of the American political enterprise. It encompasses, moreover, a continual struggle between nature and convention, interest/appetite and virtue/ethics, liberty and slavery, democracy and republicanism, liberalism and despotism, pluralism and elitism, individualism and community, religion and secularism, universalism and nationalism.

Course requirements: One take-home final examination and one paper on a subject chosen by the student, both due at the end of the semester.

Texts:

Thomas Paine, Common Sense
Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, The Federalist Papers
Herbert Storing, What the Antifederalists Were For
Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America
I. Introduction: the concept of “founding” and its relation to the Western political tradition

II. The Puritan Founding

The Mayflower Compact
John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity”
John Winthrop, On Arbitrary Government
Roger Williams, “The Bloudy Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience”
Cotton Mather, “The People of God”
The Massachusetts Body of Liberties

Recommended:
Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self
William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation
The Book of Exodus
St. Augustine, Political Writings
Edmund s. Morgan, ed., Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794
Bernard, Bailyn, the Origins of American Politics

III. Novus Ordo Saeclorum: The Revolutionary Founding and the Concept of the People

Thomas Paine, Common Sense
John Dickinson, “Letters from a Framer in Pennsylvania”
John Adams, “Thoughts on Government”
John Adams, Letter on the American Revolution
Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence”
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Henry Lee on the Object of the Declaration

Recommended:
Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution
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*
Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*
Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People*
Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*
Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*
Paul Eidelberg, *On the Silence of the Declaration of Independence*
Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*
Alexander Tsesis, *For Liberty and Equality: The Life and Times of the Declaration of Independence*

IV. Empire of Liberty: The Constitution and Republicanism

The Articles of Confederation
The 1787 US Constitution
*Publius, The Federalist Papers*
Douglas Adair, *Fame and the Founding Fathers*
Jason Frank, “*Publius and Political Imagination,*” *Political Theory* (February 2009)
Isaac Kramnick, “‘The Great National Discussion:’ The Discourse of Politics in 1787,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (1988)
Richard K. Mathews, *If Men Were Angels: Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason*
Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*
David J. Bederman, *The Classical Foundations of the American Constitution*

V. The Anti-Federalist Response

Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*
Brutus, I, VII, X, XI, XV

Recommended:

Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting tradition in America, 1788-1828*
Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*
Celia Kenyon, *Men of Little Faith*
Jackson T. Main, *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788*
Sheldon Wolin, *Presence of the Past*

VI. Democracy in America: Despotism and the New Political Science

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Recommended:

William Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*
Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*
Michael Rogin, “Liberal Society and the Indian Question”
Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life*
Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*

VII. A Compound Republic

John Calhoun, “A Disquisition on Government”
John Calhoun, “Speech on the Slave Question”

Recommended:

Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveowners Made*
A.O. Spain, *The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun*
Harvey Wish, *Antebellum*

VIII. Transcendentalism and Democracy

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Idea of Self-Government”
Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*

Recommended:

Sharon Cameron, *Impersonality*
George Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance*
George Kateb, *The Inner Ocean: Individualism and American Culture*
Robert D. Richardson, *Emerson: Mind on Fire*
Jack Turner, *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau*
IX. Abolitionism and Democracy

Mason Lowance, ed., Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader

Recommended:

Berhard Boxhill, “The Two Traditions in African-American Political Philosophy,” The Philosophical Forum (Fall-Spring, 1992)
Robert Fanuzzi, Abolition’s Public Sphere
Walter Johnson, Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market
George Shulman, American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture
John Stauffer, Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race
Andrew Delbanco, The Abolitionist Imagination

X. Popular Sovereignty and Natural Law

The Lincoln Douglas Debates, I, VII
Abraham Lincoln, “Lyceum Address”
Abraham Lincoln, “First Inaugural”
Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address”
Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural”

Recommended:

Paul M. Angle, ed., The Complete Lincoln Douglas Debates
Joseph R. Fornieri, Abraham Lincoln’s Political Faith
Gary Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg

XI. Slave and Citizen

James Madison, Federalist No. 54
Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”
Frederick Douglass, “Oration on the Memory of Abraham Lincoln”
Tocqueville, Democracy in America, I, II, chap. 10

Recommended:
David Brian Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 177-1823*
Jason Frank, “Frederick Douglass and ‘We the People,’” in Andy Schaap, ed., *Law and Agonistic Politics*
Stanley R. Engerman, ed., *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom and Free Labor*
Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll*
Eugene Genovese, *In Red and Black*
Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*
Bill Lawson and Frank Kirkland, eds., *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*
James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics*
Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*
Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*
Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*
James Mellon, *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember*
James M. McPherson, *The Negro’s Civil War*

**XII. Progressives and Democracy**

John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*
Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy*

Recommended:

Andrew Feffer, *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*
James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in American and European Social Thought*
Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*

**XIII. Elitism and Pluralism**

Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*
James Burnham, *The Machiavellians*
Roberto Michels, *Political Parties*
C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*
C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*
James H. Meisel, *The Myth of the Ruling Class*
Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*
E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*
Robert A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory
Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs?
Robert A. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics
Peter Bachrach, The Theory of Democratic Elitism
Peter Bachrach, Political Elites in a Democracy
David M. Ricci, Community Power and Democratic Theory
David M. Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science

XIV. Democratic Deliberation

Amy Gutmann, “Democratic Deliberation”
Michael Sandel, Democracy and Its Discontents
Anita L. Allen and Milton C. Regan, Jr., eds., Debating Democracy’s Discontent

XV. Multiculturalism, Identity and the Political Subject

Abraham Lincoln, “Eulogy for Henry Clay”
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “The Solitude of Self”
Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”
Kwamia Anthony Appiah, “The Limits of Pluralism”
Anne Norton, “The Virtues of Multiculturalism”
James Ceaser, “Multiculturalism and American Liberal Democracy”
Samuel P. Huntington, “Who are We?”