

GOV 496: American Political Culture

Department of Government

Georgetown University

Summer 2018

Professor R. Boyd

MTWR 1:00-3PM

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-5PM and by appointment

ICC 674

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Course Goals:

American politics is characterized by a number of fundamental paradoxes that run more or less continuously from its Puritan settlement in the seventeenth century to the present day. For example, how is it that America is ostensibly a secular nation predicated on a strict separation between church and state, and yet its political culture was at the time of the Founding, and remains even today, deeply suffused by religious faith and imagery? How can Americans be simultaneously committed to seemingly contradictory values such as that of liberty and equality, scientific progress and the preservation of tradition, or economic competition and philanthropic charity? Why do Americans cherish privacy and the cultivation of radical individuality, on the one hand, even as they extol engaged citizenship, community service, and voluntary association, on the other?

This course seeks both to explain and illuminate tensions in contemporary political culture by returning to their sources in the American political tradition. We will discuss selections from several different epochs including Puritan New England, the American Revolution, the Founding Era, critiques of democratic culture in the nineteenth century, debates over slavery and race in the years leading up to the Civil War, and the legacy of these conflicts in contemporary America.

Required Texts (inexpensive paperbacks for purchase at GU Bookstore):

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Broadview) 978-1551115719

James Madison et. al, *The Federalist Papers* (Penguin) 978-0143121978

Thomas Jefferson, *Selected Writings*, ed. Harvey Mansfield (Crofts

Classics) 978-0882951201

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Celestial Railroad and Other Short Stories*

(Signet) 978-0451530202

Abraham Lincoln, *Selected Speeches* (Library of America) 978-1598530537

#Additional readings available online via the GU Blackboard system

Class Sessions and Required Readings:

June 4: *Course Introduction*

June 5: *Puritan Establishment and Liberty*

#“Mayflower Compact” (1620)

#John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630)

#John Winthrop, “The Little Speech on Liberty” (1639)

June 6: *Toleration and the American Jeremiad*

#Roger Williams, “The Bloody Tenent of Persecution” (1644)

#Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741)

June 7: *Franklin and the Art of Virtue*

#Benjamin Franklin, “The Art of Virtue” (1784)

June 11: *Rhetoric and Revolution*

#Samuel Adams, “The Rights of the Colonists” (1772)

#Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)

June 12: *The Declaration of Independence and American Liberalism*

Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence” (1776)

June 13: *Declaration and American Liberalism, Part 2*

Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence” (1776)

June 14: *The American Founding and Constitutional Design*

The Federalist, numbers 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17

June 18: *Constitutionalism and Its Critics*

The Federalist, numbers 27, 28, 31, 35, 37, 47, 48, 49, 51, 55, 58, 70, 71
“Letter from Samuel Adams to Richard Henry Lee,” December 3, 1787
“Letters from a Federal Farmer” (Melancton Smith?)

June 19: In-class Blue Book Midterm.

June 20: *Critics of Democratic Culture: Individualism and Authenticity*

#Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays*, “History,” “Self-Reliance,” “Nature,” and “Politics.”

June 21: *Critics of Democratic Culture: Puritanism and Religion*

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Celestial Railroad*, “The Gray Champion,” “Young Goodman Brown,” “The Minister’s Black Veil,” “The Maypole of Merry Mount,”

June 25: *Critics of Democratic Culture: Science and Technology*

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Celestial Railroad*, “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” “The Celestial Railroad,” “The Birthmark,” “Rappaccini’s Daughter.”

June 26: Critics of Democratic Culture: Aristocracy and Manners

#James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat*, selections (**Analytical Paper due In-class**)

June 27: *Critics of Democratic Culture: Gender and Economic Inequality*

#Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Address Delivered at Seneca Falls”
#Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes”

June 28: *Slavery and the Culture of Racism*

#George Fitzhugh, "Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters"

#John C. Calhoun, "The Goods of Slavery"

July 2 and 3: *Lincoln and the Crisis of American Liberalism, Parts 1 and 2*

Abraham Lincoln, "Young Men's Lyceum," pp. 13-21; "Fragments on Government and Slavery," p. 91; "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," pp. 117-128; "House Divided Speech," pp. 131-139; "Lincoln-Douglas Debates," pp. 149-196; "Lecture on Discoveries," pp. 200-208.

July 5: *Lincoln and the Crisis of American Liberalism, Part 3*

Lincoln, "Address at Cooper Institute," pp. 240-251; "First Inaugural Address," pp. 284-293; "Address on Colonization," pp. 338-342; "Address at Gettysburg," p. 405; "Address at the Sanitary Fair," pp. 422-424; "Second Inaugural," pp. 449-450.

#Frederick Douglass, "What the Black Man Wants"

July 8th. Take-Home Final Exam due by email at 11:59PM to rb352@georgetown.edu.

Course Requirements:

There are five formal requirements for GOV 496.

- 1) In-class, blue book midterm on required readings and lectures=25%
- 2) Analytical paper of 5-7 pages=25%.
- 3) Final, take-home examination covering all material since mid-term=25%.
- 4) 4 short weekly reaction papers (1-2 pages each) responding to different authors throughout the session=10%
- 5) Attendance and active participation in class discussions=15%.

Statement on Attendance Policy for Summer Session classes:

Attendance and class participation is a graded component of Gov 496 in the Summer Session. What this means, in practice, is that at the end of the term when calculating grades I will take into account not only a student's physical presence in class but the contribution they've made to our discussions. You're wondering: "Does this mean that if I'm quiet and don't speak up in class I'll get a bad grade?" Not necessarily. I fully recognize that some people are naturally less comfortable participating in class discussions than others. However, most students at the end of the term inevitably find themselves midway between two grades. Students who've made consistent and meaningful contributions may expect to receive the higher of the two grades.

In addition, the Dean of the Summer School has requested that all instructors clarify their policies for conspicuous non-attendance.

Attendance is obviously important during the regular academic year, but it takes on heightened importance in an intensive, accelerated Summer Session. Missing even a single class in the Summer Session means that one may have missed an entire thinker. Missing two or three classes is the equivalent of weeks in a regular academic term. In recognition of this reality, and regardless of a student's performance on the other components of the course, I reserve the right to give an unsatisfactory grade to any student who for any reason misses more than **three** of the class sessions. If you anticipate missing—for any reason whatsoever—conspicuous amounts of class time this summer, then you should not enroll in the course.