

American Political Thought
POLI3070 (3 Credits)
Spring 2023

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Emma Rodman

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Office: Dugan Hall 201K

Office Hours: Tuesday from 2-3 pm (zoom) and Thursday from 12:45-1:45 (in-person), as well as by appointment

Teaching assistant: Rahab Kisio (Rahab_Kisio@student.uml.edu)

GENERAL LOGISTICS

Lecture: Coburn Hall 110

Blackboard: Readings, the most-up-to-date copy of the syllabus, and essay prompts will be posted

COURSE DESCRIPTION

America, wrote George Santayana, is a young country with an old mentality. European political thought has deeply shaped American political values and institutions, but at the same time, America is not Europe. America is a young country, with a comparatively short history, that has been shaped by strange things: the “empty” freedom of the frontier, Indigenous occupants, unfathomable natural resources, intense religious fervor, and unprecedented human suffering. In short, America has its own distinctive tradition of political thought. In this course, we will explore the sources and threads of political thought in the American experience, drawing on both canonical political thinkers as well as popular and critical sources. We will begin with the Puritan colonial founding and continue through roughly the present day. This course highlights the relationship between learning the history of political theory in America and coming to our own contemporary political understandings. To that end, course work emphasizes reflective and contemplative practices, including a field trip to nearby Walden Pond.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To develop:

1. A grounding in the central concepts, arguments, and thinkers in American political thought
2. An appreciation for how political theory informs the study and practice of politics and political science in the American context
3. Skills in analytical, interpretive, and reflective writing

UNIVERSITY ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES (ELO) DESIGNATIONS

- Written and Oral Communication (WOC)
- Diversity and Cultural Awareness (DCA)

REQUIRED TEXTS

Nearly all of the required readings will be posted as PDF files to Blackboard (these are marked with an * in the course schedule, below). Others – usually the readings we are engaging across multiple class meetings – you will need to purchase or borrow from the library, or find free online electronic copies. I do particularly advise the Chicago press version of Tocqueville, as the translation from Tocqueville's original French is particularly readable (and you'll be able to follow the page numbers in class seamlessly).

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (University of Chicago Press)

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Oxford University Press)

These texts should be available for purchase at the campus bookstore in the University Crossing building. I believe you can get both for under \$30. I have also placed these texts on reserve in O'Leary Library where you may borrow them for two hours at a time.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade in this course will be based on one essay in lieu of a midterm exam (1000-1250 words, which translates to about 4-5 double spaced pages), one longer paper in lieu of a final exam (2500-3000 words; about 7-9 double spaced pages), and several short reflective writing exercises. There are no exams in this course. I will circulate writing prompts with more detailed instructions and guidelines approximately two weeks before the midterm and final due dates. Assignments will be weighted and due as follows:

Class Participation		10%
Contemplative Passage Selection		5%
Quick Writes		10%
Walden Pond visit and/or essay		15%
Midterm Essay	March 9 th by 3 pm	20%
Final Essay	May 3 rd by 3 pm	40%

I care that you keep up with the readings; I have scaled them to be relatively manageable, and I expect you to read them carefully before class. You'll get much more out of lecture and discussion if you do the readings beforehand.

I will ask you to do a handful of short “quick write” assignments throughout the semester; I will either ask you to write during class or I will give you the prompt at the end of class to be completed as homework. In the latter case, you will be expected to turn in your thoughts (approx. 200-300 words; 1 page) at the beginning of the next class meeting; they will be graded Pass/Fail. Though they should demonstrate that you put thought and care into them in order to receive a grade of “Pass,” these definitely do not need to be highly polished pieces of writing. You can treat them like meditations or journal entries; they are a written form of class participation. Your regular and thoughtful in-class participation in discussions will also be factored into your final course grade.

There will be assignments throughout the semester designed to deepen your reflection on the material and to encourage contemplation about the themes of the course.

Contemplative Reading Passage – Everyone will be assigned a day throughout the semester where it is their responsibility to select, and email to me, a sentence or short paragraph in advance of class from the assigned reading. We will use these passages for our in-class contemplative reading practice.

Visit to Walden Pond – We will visit Walden Pond as a class and engage in practices of reading and contemplation derived from Henry David Thoreau's writing. If you are unable to (or choose not to) attend, you will instead be required to write a 4-5 page paper on Thoreau and Transcendental thought.

I will note that while there is no official attendance policy for the course, policies on quick writes,

contemplative practices, and class participation are designed to incentivize your attendance.

Course Schedule

* = reading posted on course website

Tuesday, Jan. 17: Syllabus review and a brief introduction to the course
Mark Twain, "A Fable"*

The Beginning: Puritanism and Indigenous Encounters

Thursday, Jan. 19: John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630)*

Tuesday, Jan. 24: William Apess, "Eulogy on King Philip" (1836)*

The American Revolution and Founding

Thursday, Jan. 26: Nathaniel Niles, "Two Discourses on Liberty" (1775)*

Tuesday, Jan. 31: Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)* [Note: longer reading day]

Thursday, Feb. 2: Local and state declarations of independence*
Declaration of Independence (Jefferson's first draft)*
Declaration of Independence (Congress's final draft)*
[Note: shorter reading day]

Tuesday, Feb. 7: Federalist Papers (selections)*

Thursday, Feb. 9: Anti-Federalist Papers (selections)*

**No class on Feb. 9 as I will be traveling to a conference in Wisconsin. I will circulate a quick write prompt to be completed on the anti-federalist readings in lieu of class.*

Tuesday, Feb. 14: The U.S. Constitution*
Charles Beard, "The Constitution as an Economic Document" (1913)*

The Early Republic and Transcendentalism

Thursday, Feb. 16: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)

No class on Feb. 21 due to UML holiday

Thursday, Feb. 23: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)

Midterm essay prompts circulated

Tuesday, Feb. 28: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar"*

Thursday, March 2: Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" and "Civil Disobedience"*

Tuesday, March 7 and Thursday, March 9: *No class (spring recess)*

Midterm essay due on Blackboard on Thursday, March 9th by 3 pm

The Civil War and Reconstruction

- Tuesday, March 14: Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Queries XIV, XVIII (1787)*
John C. Calhoun, "Speech in the U.S. Senate" (1837)*
Orlando Patterson, "The Constituent Elements of Slavery" (1982)*
[Note: longer reading day]
- Thursday, March 16: Abraham Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Vidal and Fehrenbacher* (selections)
- Tuesday, March 21: Abraham Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Vidal and Fehrenbacher* (selections)
- Thursday, March 23: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (selections)*

Feminism, Technology, and Progressivism

- Tuesday, March 28: Margaret Fuller, "Women in the 19th Century"*
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self"*
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"*

** Note: this class meeting may involve a presentation on career trajectories for political science students*

- Thursday, March 30: Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (selections)
- Tuesday, April 4: Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (selections)
- Thursday, April 6: Eugene Debs, "Industrial Unionism" (1905)*

** Thursday, April 6: No class, as I will be at a conference in California; you will do a quick write on Debs in lieu of class meeting.*

Civil Rights and Incivility

- Tuesday, April 11: Allen Ginsberg, "America" (1956)*
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (selections) (1957)*
- Thursday, April 13: Class visit to Walden Pond. In consultation with one another and with the weather, we may decide to move our visit to April 12, 14, 15, or 16.
- Tuesday, April 18: Martin Luther King Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" (1960)*
- *Final paper prompts circulated; papers are due by May 3rd at 3 pm on Blackboard**
- Thursday, April 20: Martin Luther King Jr., "The Ethical Demands for Integration" (1962)*
- Tuesday, April 25: Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury," "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider* (1984)*

Thursday, April 27:

Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," "The Uses of Anger," and "Learning from the 60s" in *Sister Outsider* (1984)*

COURSE DETAILS, POLICIES, & MISCELLANY

Communication

It is important that you check your UML email regularly, as I may send out vital course information via email throughout the semester. If for any reason I need to cancel class, I will communicate via email.

Students are welcome to contact me via email for logistical inquiries (such as making appointments). Please use your UML email account for such correspondence. Substantive questions and communications are very much encouraged but will be reserved for office hours and in-person meetings. My email address is emma_rodman@uml.edu. I make every effort to reply to emails within 48 business hours of receiving them (i.e. if you email me on Monday morning, I'll reply by Wednesday morning; if you email me on Friday evening, you can expect to hear back by Tuesday evening). Please note that this timeline applies even when deadlines loom: i.e. if you have a question about a paper, please be sure to be in touch at least 48 hours before it is due.

Finally, I reserve the right to modify this syllabus over the course of the semester as necessary. I will communicate all such modifications both over email and in lecture.

Office Hours

I enjoy meeting with students during office hours! My in-person office hours are Thursday from 12:45-1:45 pm and on Zoom on Tuesday from 2-3 pm. I'm also available by appointment. My office is in Dugan Hall in the Political Science Dept. suite on the second floor of the building (suite 201).

Health Notes

I am immunocompromised and will be wearing a mask during our class meetings and in office hours. I would greatly appreciate it if you would wear a mask as well during class, but I am not requiring it. My office, however, is a mask-required place; if you prefer not to wear a mask, I will ask you to schedule our meetings over Zoom rather than in person.

Policy on Technology

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted at any time in class. There is a large body of research that demonstrates that taking notes on paper allows for better focus and retention. There is a similarly large body of anecdotal evidence that no one can help watching the activities taking place on the screen of the person sitting one row in front of them. If you have a compelling reason to request an exception to this policy, please see me.

Writing Skills & Tutoring

Good writing only comes with practice and revision. As you work through your writing assignments for this course, I encourage you produce drafts, revise them, and discuss them with each other, Kheya, and myself. I also strongly encourage you to avail yourself of the Center for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS). CLASS will be offering [tutoring](#) and [Writing Center](#) services in-person this fall at both O'Leary

Library (during the day) and at Fox Hall (nights and weekends). You may drop in any time to the tutoring center. I am in the process of requesting a tutor specific to this course; I will update you if that becomes available over the course of the semester. The Writing Center requires that you make appointments; you may book up to two 45 minute sessions with a tutor per week.

Late Policy

Uncompleted or missing papers will receive a grade of 0.0. Late assignments will be docked one grade interval per day. That is: 3.7 paper, if turned in past the deadline, will become a 3.3, if turned in one full 24-hour day late, will receive a 3.0, and so on. Exceptions *may* be made given prompt and (if necessary) documented consultation with the instructor. For full consideration, make sure to correspond with me via email prior to a late submission rather than afterwards.

Plagiarism

Do not copy another person's writing or ideas and claim them as your own! This course puts a strong emphasis on developing your skills as a writer and thinker, which requires you to struggle through the process of writing in your own voice about your own ideas. You would be well advised to stay far, far away from online sources of summary or Wikipedia pages. If you are confused about a thinker or concept, talk to me, not to the internet. Should any of the internet's language seep into your work – or should you engage in any other form of academic dishonesty – you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment and a Notification of Academic Dishonesty Form will be filed with the Office of the Provost. Note that I am quite experienced and adept at detecting plagiarized work. University policies and guidelines regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism can be found at <https://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic-policies/academic-integrity.aspx>

Student Mental Health and Well-Being

These are strange and uncertain times. If you or someone you know are experiencing mental health challenges at UML, please contact [Counseling Services](#). My understanding is that they offer free in-person counseling for all students.

Disability Services & Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that will require classroom accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible, so that we might make appropriate arrangements. Please speak to me during office hours or send me an email, as I respect, and want to protect, your privacy. Visit the [Student Disability Services webpage](#) for further information.

If you wish to observe a religious holiday that is not recognized by the University calendar, please let us know in advance, so that we may accommodate your absence from class.

Recordings and Privacy

Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record without permission. Recordings of classroom lectures are my intellectual property. Audio and video recording of my lectures is prohibited, unless you are registered with Disabilities Services and recording of class sessions is an approved accommodation. In addition, sharing or selling recordings of classroom activity, discussions, or lectures with any other person or medium without my permission is prohibited.