

**American Political Thought**  
Political Science 312T  
Williams College

Justin Crowe  
jec3@williams.edu  
Schapiro 229, x2418  
W 9-10, F 10-11:30 and by appointment

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TR 8:30-9:45  
Schapiro 137

**Description.**

From democracy to liberty, equality to community, foundational *ideas*—about what makes for good government, about what constitutes the good society, about what is necessary to lead a good life—define the American political tradition and consume the American political imagination. Designed not only to uncover these (sometimes melodious, sometimes cacophonous) values but also to place current ideological debates about them in a broader developmental context, this tutorial will offer a topical tour of American political thinking from the birth of nationalism in the colonial period to the remaking of conservatism and liberalism in the early twenty-first century. Utilizing primary source material ranging from presidential speeches to party platforms, newspaper editorials to novels, we will seek to interrogate—reconciling where possible, distinguishing where necessary, interpreting in all instances—the disparate visions and assessments of the American political experience offered by politicians, artists, intellectuals, activists, and ordinary citizens over the course of more than two centuries. Our focus, then, is nothing less than the story of America—as told by those who lived it.

**Objectives.**

**Thinking Ideationally.** Ideas matter. In American politics, they have long mattered quite a bit. Indeed, from its earliest days, the American political universe has been peculiarly—perhaps uniquely among our set of global peers—concerned with and oriented around ideas. Part of our task this semester is not only to unpack the substance of those ideas—what they are and have been, how they have recurred or evolved—but also to explore both the variety of figures who have articulated them and the composite traditions they form.

**Thinking Interpretively.** Ideas are funny things: as much as they matter, they're also slippery and ineffable. Money you can touch, stars you can see, music you can hear, but ideas—well, ideas we can (and must!) interpret and debate. Although the precise style of our inquiry will no doubt vary from week to week—and from pair to pair—we will, across the semester, seek to inhabit and unpack our material with an eye toward understanding not only what is said but also what is (or might be) meant.

**Format.**

Aside from a trio of seminar-style discussions (two in the first full week of the semester, one in the last week of the semester) and a concluding workshop-style mini-conference at which you will present a draft of your final essay, we will operate in tutorial format, meeting—you, me, your partner—for approximately one hour each week for ten weeks, with you and your partner alternating between delivering an essay and presenting a critique. Unlike even the smallest of seminars, a tutorial in no small part belongs to—is motored by and dependent upon—*you*. It is your ideas that will serve as the focus of our conversations and your interests that will guide our intellectual progression. Although I will obviously be a(n active) participant in our dialogues, I fundamentally see a tutorial not as an occasion for me to hold forth about my ideas but as a chance for us to play with yours. This means that you will have ample opportunity to ask questions, share your views, and generally interrogate the course material; indeed, the nature of a tutorial positively *requires* you to do so.

## Materials.

- Kramnick and Lowi, *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology* (2009) (KL)\*
- PSCI 312 course packet (in two volumes) (CP)\*\*

## Contributions.\*\*\*

**Essays (45%).** Five 5-7 page essays, due—via email—to me and your partner no less than *twenty-four hours* prior to tutorial and then read aloud at the start of each session. In completing these essays, you may either answer one of the questions I have provided or—preferably subject to my approval—write on a topic of your choosing, but, regardless of the origins of the prompt, the challenge remains the same: to analyze the assigned material, reflect on the issues at hand, and articulate—and then support with ample textual evidence—an argument that answers some question about American political thought.

**Critiques (15%).** Five 2-3 page critiques, due—in hard copy—to me and your partner at the start of tutorial and then summarized (but not formally read) following the recitation of your partner’s essay. (You will also provide your partner with an annotated copy of his/her essay with any additional, smaller, or marginal comments or suggestions you may have.) The task here is neither to summarize your partner’s essay nor to answer a different question about the material but, rather, to evaluate your partner’s analytic claims and offer some combination of constructive criticism and an alternative interpretation of them.

**Final Essay (20%).** A revised and extended 10-12 page final essay, a draft of which will be presented at a (mandatory) workshop-style mini-conference to take place during either the last week of the semester or reading period, with final submission during exam period.

**Tutorial Participation (20%).** A process of *active engagement* that entails more than simply reading an essay or authoring a critique. At base, a tutorial is a conversation, and your job is to be an active, informed, and constructive participant in that conversation. Accordingly, tutorial participation grades are not a “free 20%” but, rather, a reflection of my holistic assessment of your performance in our sessions.

## Evaluation.

**Written Work.** Good writing is good thinking—that is to say, writing well first requires thinking well. The manner in which and the depth with which you approach writing and thinking will be the determining factors in your grade. More specifically, I base grades for written work on the following three factors: the extent to which you make a clear, compelling, and original *argument*; the extent to which you support that argument through close analysis and consideration of primary source *evidence*; and the extent to which you organize and articulate your thoughts in a logical and sophisticated *structure*. Needless to say, proper mechanics of writing—including features such as grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and so forth—are assumed; be sure to proofread your work in order to catch any errors along these lines.

Written work in the **A** range is characterized by a strikingly creative, perceptive, and persuasive argument; comprehensive synthesis and trenchant analysis of an abundance of course material; straightforward yet sophisticated organization of thoughts; and clear, cogent, fluid, and error-free prose. Written work in the **B** range is characterized by a sound, original, and reasonably thoughtful argument; competent analysis of various course material; logical and intelligible organization; and clear, cogent, and error-free prose. Written work in the **C** range is characterized by a relatively underdeveloped,

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\* Available for purchase at Water Street Books.

\*\* Volume One will be distributed in short order; Volume Two will be available later in the semester.

\*\*\* I reserve the right to fail any student who fails any element—essays, critiques, final essay, participation—of the course.

simplistic, or derivative argument; partial, inconsistent, or faulty analysis of course material; convoluted organization; and awkward, stilted, or otherwise distracting prose. Written work in the **D** range is characterized by an incoherent or extremely confusing argument; superficial or fleeting engagement with the course material; chaotic or irrational organization; and distorted, error-riddled prose. Written work that lacks any argument or analysis, fails to engage the course material, or is any way incomprehensible earns an **F**.\*

**Tutorial Participation.** Tutorial participation grades are based primarily on three factors: the degree to which you demonstrate analytic or critical understanding of the course material, the degree to which you articulate thoughtful or original questions and arguments in response to that material, and the degree to which you succeed in advancing discussion by responding meaningfully to what your partner has said.

Tutorial participation grades in the **A** range are reserved for those students who consistently come to tutorial with novel questions to ask, insightful comments to offer, and compelling material to reference, generally elevating the level of discussion in the process. Tutorial participation grades in the **B** range are earned by those students who are engaged and participatory but do not stimulate new points of inquiry, carefully listen to their partner, or adequately relate their comments to the direction of the conversation. Tutorial participation grades in the **C** range are for those students who are infrequent or unwilling contributors to tutorial. Participation grades of **D** and **F**, respectively, are for those students who do not arrive adequately prepared for tutorial and for those who disrupt and detract from the overall quality of the conversation.

### **Responsibilities.**

**Attendance.** Put simply, I expect you to be in tutorial *each and every week*. (It should go without saying that I also expect you to be present in each of our seminar sessions and at the end of the semester mini-conference.) This is true in all my courses, but, given the nature of a tutorial, it is absolutely essential here. By choosing to take this class, you are making a commitment to me, to your partner, and to yourself that you will be an active and engaged participant in our academic triumvirate. I would normally say that class will go on without you, but that is simply not possible in a tutorial setting. If there is a legitimate medical or family emergency that makes it impossible for you to attend tutorial, it is essential that you let me and your partner know *immediately*. Otherwise, you should consider your tutorial session a rare ironclad commitment in your week.

**Punctuality and Preparedness.** As part of your aforementioned commitment to me, your partner, and yourself, you are expected to arrive at tutorial on time, prepared, and *without technological distractions*. Regardless of whether you have written the essay or the critique for that particular week, you should, first, have thoroughly and carefully read the material before tutorial and, second, be willing and ready to contribute your thoughts about it to our conversation. Although I recognize that students lead busy lives, have commitments (both academic and otherwise) in addition to this course, and may occasionally be affected by unforeseen events and unpredictable circumstances that make adequate preparation difficult, the nature of a tutorial means that unpreparedness is simply not an option. Please give our tutorial the best possible chance at success by scheduling your time and organizing your workload so as to enable robust preparation.

**Discourse and Decorum.** You are responsible for conducting yourself appropriately—both in your own comments and in your responses (verbal or otherwise) to the comments of your partner. As respectful discourse is the norm, criticism should be reserved for ideas, arguments, and opinions rather than for people; ad hominem comments will not be tolerated.

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\* The following adjectives capture the essence of what individual grades mean in this course: truly exceptional (A+), outstanding (A), excellent (A-), very good (B+), good (B), satisfactory (B-), fair (C+), sub-par (C), poor (C-), seriously deficient (D+), minimally acceptable (D), borderline unacceptable (D-), completely unacceptable (F).

**Submitting Work.** Because of the specific nature of a tutorial—and, specifically, the way that it places you and your partner in a position of mutual dependence—it is absolutely imperative that you submit work on time. Absent extreme and unavoidable circumstances necessitating the postponement of our tutorial sessions, there is simply no possibility for an extension.

**Academic Honesty.** I hope—frankly, I *expect*—this will not be an issue, but it is worth repeating that all work you do in this course is governed by the College’s Honor Code. (If you have any questions about how the Honor Code applies, do not hesitate to ask!) I take scholarly integrity very seriously, and any suspected violations will be pursued to the fullest extent. *No exceptions.*

### Contact Information.

**Email.** The most efficient way to reach me is via email. As a general rule, emails received before 9pm will usually receive a reply that day; emails received after 9pm will likely receive a reply on the following day.

**Office Hours.** For my regularly scheduled office hours, no sign-up or prior notice is necessary, nor is a specific course-related question or concern. (If you wish to schedule an appointment for another time, you should let me know a few days in advance.) Although I am obviously available to discuss any issues that may arise in tutorial or in the reading, you are also more than welcome to stop by and join me for some friendly conversation. Indeed, I encourage you to do so; really—come see me. I am interested in learning about you and your thoughts, and I never (well, ok, hardly ever) tire of talking about American political thought.

### Some Final Thoughts.

I take teaching seriously, and I hope you will reciprocate by taking learning seriously. That said, I intend for our tutorials to be enjoyable—both for you and for me. This course revolves around rich, interesting, and controversial ideas, many (if not all) with direct connection to current events and contemporary American politics. So expect to teach each other and to learn from each other, but also expect to enjoy yourself; for my part, I promise to do the same.

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### Introduction

- a. In Search of the (American) Center (February 4)  
handout: Barry, “In the Middle of Nowhere, a Nation’s Center”\*
- b. Thinking About American Political Thinking (February 10)  
handouts: Robert McCloskey, “American Political Thought and the Study of Politics”  
Martin Diamond, “Comment on McCloskey”
- c. American Voices, American Vistas (February 12)  
handouts: Samuel Huntington, from *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*  
Anne-Marie Slaughter, from *The Idea That Is America*  
George Will, from *Statecraft as Soulcraft*  
E.J. Dionne, “Why History Matters to Liberalism”  
Morgan Marietta, from *A Citizen’s Guide to American Ideology*

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\* If you are so inclined, I once gave a speech—as part of the Williams Thinking series on campus—inspired by this very article and not unrelated to the themes of our course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7ZlzcKs9vg>.

## I. Nationalism (week of February 16)

KL: The Mayflower Compact (1620) – p. 73

John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) – pp. 11-16

John Winthrop, “Defence of an Order of Court” (1637) – pp. 17-20

John Winthrop, “Little Speech on Liberty” (1639) – pp. 20-23

Roger Williams, “The Bloody Tenent of Persecution” (1644) – pp. 25-27

John Wise, “A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches” (1717) – pp. 31-42

Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers” (1750) – pp. 43-52

Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” (1758) – pp. 53-60

James Otis, “The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved” (1764) – pp. 100-107

Samuel Adams, “The Rights of the Colonists” (1772) – pp. 108-113

CP: Thomas Jefferson, “A Summary View of the Rights of British America” (1774)

KL: John Adams, “Novanglus” (1775) – pp. 119-124

CP: Patrick Henry, “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” (1775)

KL: Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776) – pp. 131-149

Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, I (1776) – pp. 149-151

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776) – pp. 151-154

CP: George Washington, Letter to Reverend William Gordon (1783)

KL: Benjamin Franklin, “The Art of Virtue” (1784) – pp. 60-66

Benjamin Franklin, “Information to Those Who Would Remove America” (1784) – pp. 66-72

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Colonel Edward Carrington (1787) – pp. 359-360

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William S. Smith (1787) – pp. 360-361

soundtrack: John Dickinson, “The Liberty Song” (1770)

“Yankee Doodle” (1770s)

William Billings, “Chester” (1778)

Philip Phile and Joseph Hopkinson, “Hail Columbia” (1798)

Francis Scott Key, “The Star-Spangled Banner” (1814)

slideshow: Benjamin Franklin, “Join or Die”

John Trumbull, “Declaration of Independence”

Emanuel Leutze, “Washington Crossing the Delaware”

1) How deeply is early American political thought suffused with a Puritan sensibility? How clear are the fingerprints of Winthrop, Williams, Wise, and Mayhew on what will become colonial and revolutionary era thought?

2) What are the main components in the political thought of American nationhood? To what extent and in what ways do these components seek (and manage) to break with the British tradition? To what extent and in what ways can political thought in colonial and revolutionary America be described as distinctively *American*?

3) Are early American thinkers easily characterized in terms of a unified and coherent ideology? Does the political vision they articulate possess one central ideological commitment? A constellation of multiple—either interrelated or independent—commitments? A mess of tensions and inconsistencies?

4) What is the meaning and importance of the concept of “liberty” in proto-American political thinking? What are the contours and dimensions of it? How cherished is it relative to other values that arise in this period?

## II. Constitutionalism (week of February 23)\*

- KL: John Adams, *Thoughts on Government* (1776) – pp. 124-130  
The Articles of Confederation (1778) – pp. 155-162  
Alexander Hamilton, Letter to James Duane (1780) – pp. 163-170
- CP: James Madison, “Vices of the Political System of the United States” (1787)
- KL: The Constitution of the United States (1787) – pp. 170-181  
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* 1 (1787) – pp. 191-195  
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* 9 (1787) – pp. 195-199  
James Madison, *The Federalist* 10 (1787) – pp. 199-205  
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* 23 (1787) – pp. 205-209  
James Madison, *The Federalist* 39 (1787) – pp. 209-215  
James Madison, *The Federalist* 48 (1787) – pp. 215-219  
James Madison, *The Federalist* 51 (1787) – pp. 219-223  
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* 84 (1787) – pp. 236-244  
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison (1787) – pp. 244-247  
Richard Henry Lee (?), Letters from the Federal Farmer (1787) – pp. 248-256  
Robert Yates (?), Essays of Brutus (1787-1788) – pp. 256-266  
Patrick Henry, Debate in the Virginia Ratifying Convention (1788) – pp. 266-274
- CP: James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, Correspondence on a Bill of Rights (1788-1789)
- KL: Thomas Jefferson, Letter to David Humphreys (1789) – pp. 247-248  
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison (1789) – pp. 361-364  
The Bill of Rights (1791) – pp. 281-283  
Alexander Hamilton, Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank (1791) – pp. 304-309  
Thomas Jefferson, Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank (1791) – pp. 348-352  
George Washington, “Farewell Address” (1796) – pp. 319-323  
James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, “Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions” (1798) – pp. 375-381  
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Elbridge Gerry (1799) – pp. 364-365  
Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address (1801) – pp. 352-355  
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Samuel Kercheval (1816) – pp. 372-374  
John Marshall, *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) – pp. 327-336

slideshow: Andrew Ellicott, “Plan of Washington”

1) How should we conceptualize the disagreement between Federalists (Madison and Hamilton) and Anti-Federalists (Lee, Yates, S. Adams)? Is it a lover’s quarrel where there is agreement on political means but disagreement on political ends? Is it a clash of fundamentally different understandings of American political principles and fundamentally different visions of American political life? Is it something else entirely?

2) Do the Federalists or the Anti-Federalists have the more persuasive claims about the virtues and vices of the Constitution? Given what they knew—or, at least, what they thought they knew—at the time, should the Founders have more acutely feared too much power or too little power?

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\* Quite remarkably, the College owns *original* copies of the nation’s founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, *The Federalist*, and the Bill of Rights. With the Chapin Library in construction limbo, the documents are currently on display at WCMA. While I will not require you to visit, I cannot recommend strongly enough that you choose to do so in the course of reading this material and considering these issues.

- 3) Does *The Federalist* actually articulate an American *science* of politics—a systematic set of testable hypotheses and rational predictions about the political universe? Or does it merely consist of a set of values and aspirations that Publius ardently hopes will be realized?
- 4) Was the shift in political thought from the Revolution to the Constitution incremental or radical? Is constitutionalism better conceptualized as a betrayal of independence or an implementation of it?
- 5) Looking back at his writings from Week I as well as this week, how should we characterize the political thought of Thomas Jefferson? Is Jeffersonian thought wholly democratic or partly democratic and partly patrician? Is it most concerned with the liberty of the individual, the autonomy of the community, or the success of the nation? How should we evaluate it? Is it simple or sophisticated? Is it hypocritical or principled? Is it dangerous or desirable?
- 6) To what extent are the seeds of conflict and dysfunction that we know are coming already planted and sown at this early juncture of American political debate? Based solely on the writing you see here (and not on the developments you know are on the horizon), do the Founding era constitutional disagreements—between Publius and his critics, between Hamilton and Jefferson—seem reconcilable or paralyzing? What are the main points of divergence, and how far apart do the respective sides seem on those points?

### III. Individualism (week of March 2)

CP: Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1819)

KL: Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message to Congress (1829) – pp. 419-424

Andrew Jackson, Bank Veto Message (1832) – pp. 427-430

Daniel Webster, Speech on Jackson’s Veto of the United States Bank Bill (1832) – pp. 443-447

George Bancroft, “The Office of the People in Art, Government...” (1835) – pp. 451-456

CP: John L. O’Sullivan, “An Introductory Statement of the Democratic Principle” (1837)

KL: Andrew Jackson, “Farewell Address” (1837) – pp. 431-443

CP: Roger B. Taney and Joseph Story, *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge* (1837)

KL: James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat* (1838) – pp. 465-471

CP: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837)

KL: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1840) – pp. 471-476

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Politics” (1849) – pp. 476-484

Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849) – pp. 484-491

CP: Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* (1854)

KL: Henry David Thoreau, “Life Without Principle” (1863) – pp. 491-497

CP: Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” (1855\*)

Walt Whitman, “I Hear America Singing” (1860)

Walt Whitman, “O Me! O Life!” (1865)

KL: Walt Whitman, “Democratic Vistas” (1871) – pp. 497-505

soundtrack: Samuel Francis Smith, “My Country, ’Tis of Thee” (1831)

slideshow: Thomas Cole, “The Oxbow”

Thomas Cole, “View on the Catskill—Early Autumn”

Frederic Edwin Church, “Niagara”

Frederic Edwin Church, “Landscape in the Adirondacks”

1) To what extent is Jacksonianism (as seen in Jackson, Bancroft, and O’Sullivan) a continuation of—or return to?—Jeffersonianism (Weeks I and II)? To what extent is it a revision of it?

2) Are there meaningful intellectual connections between Jacksonian populism and transcendentalism (as seen in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman)? Are there political commonalities that link the two belief systems as part of the same political era? What do those connections and commonalities say about the basic contours and fundamental commitments of political thought in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century?

3) Is there such a thing as “transcendentalist” political theory? What are the major applications of transcendentalism to political life and debate? How significant are its contribution to politics? How important is politics to the transcendentalist enterprise?

4) Was Walt Whitman a democratic theorist masquerading as a poet? Or a poet interested in democracy? Is the balance of his vision—his ideology, his worldview—more literary or political?

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\* Originally published as part of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 but revised continuously until 1881.

5) Is the democratic impulse—the deep commitment to, the intensive yearning for, the robust embrace of—that characterizes so much of political thought in the 40 years leading up to the Civil War a novel contribution to the American political tradition? Would either colonists and revolutionaries (Week I) or the Founding generation (Week II) have recognized this form of government and this way of life that figures as disparate as Jackson and Whitman call “democracy”?

6) Is either Jacksonianism or transcendentalism a direct reaction to *The Federalist* (Week II)? How might we read one or both as offering a “humanity of politics” to moderate and contextualize the Publian “science of politics”?

#### IV. Abolitionism and (Dis-)Unionism (week of March 9)

- KL: David Walker, *Appeal...to the Colored Citizens of the World...* (1829) – pp. 581-588  
William Lloyd Garrison, *The Liberator* (1831) – pp. 554-559  
William Lloyd Garrison, Declaration of Sentiments of the American... (1833) – pp. 559-563  
John C. Calhoun, Speeches on Slavery (1837, 1838) – pp. 601-607
- CP: Abraham Lincoln, “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions” (1838)
- KL: Theodore Dwight Weld, *Slavery As It Is* (1839) – pp. 577-581  
John C. Calhoun, “A Disquisition on Government” (1848) – pp. 607-623  
Frederick Douglass, Lectures on Slavery (1850) – pp. 591-594  
Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852) – pp. 594-598  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or Life Among the Lonely* (1852) – pp. 598-600  
Abraham Lincoln, Speech at Peoria, Illinois (1854) – pp. 649-654  
George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South; or, the Failure of Free Society* (1854) – pp. 624-636  
George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All or, Slaves Without Masters* (1857) – pp. 636-643  
Roger B. Taney, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) – pp. 644-647  
Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the *Dred Scott* Decision in Springfield, Illinois (1857) – pp. 654-660  
James Henry Hammond, “Mud Sill” Speech (1858) – pp. 647-649
- CP: The Lincoln-Douglas Debates (1858)  
Abraham Lincoln, “A House Divided” (1858)
- KL: Abraham Lincoln, Cooper Union Address (1860) – pp. 666-667  
Abraham Lincoln, New Haven Address (1860) – pp. 667-668
- CP: Jefferson Davis, Inaugural Address for the Confederate States of America (1861)  
Alexander Stephens, “The Cornerstone Speech” (1861)
- KL: Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address (1861) – pp. 668-676  
Abraham Lincoln, Address to Congress (1861) – pp. 676-679
- CP: Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Horace Greeley (1862)
- KL: Abraham Lincoln, Second Annual Message to Congress (1862) – pp. 679-683  
Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (1863) – pp. 683  
Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865) – pp. 684-685
- CP: Thaddeus Stevens, “The Fruit of Foul Rebellion” (1865)
- KL: Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments (1865, 1868, 1870) – pp. 926-928
- soundtrack: A.G. Duncan, “My Country, ’Tis of Thee” (1843) [abolitionist version]  
C.S. Marsh and C.B. Hall, “John Brown’s Body” (1861)  
“Go Down Moses” (1862)  
“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” (1862)  
Julia Ward Howe, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” (1862)  
George Frederick Root, “Battle Cry of Freedom” (1862) [Union version]  
H.L. Schreiner and W.H. Barnes, “Battle Cry of Freedom” (1862) [Confederate version]  
Walter Kittridge, “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground” (1863)  
“Oh, Freedom” (1865)
- slideshow: Robert Duncanson, “Uncle Tom and Little Eva”  
Eastman Johnson, “A Ride for Liberty”  
Theodor Kaufmann, “On to Liberty”  
Winslow Homer, “The War for the Union”  
Matthew Brady, “On the Antietam Battlefield”

1) To what extent are abolitionists like Garrison and Douglass the true intellectual descendants of revolutionaries like S. Adams and Paine (Week I)? How apt are the analogies between slavery and colonialism?

2) Are slaveholders and secessionists like Calhoun, Fitzhugh, Davis, and Stephens doing anything other than taking Jeffersonian political thought (Weeks I and II) to its logical extreme?

3) Is Abraham Lincoln a profound and sophisticated political thinker? Does he offer a political vision that is cogent and persuasive or just a moral vision that is reassuring and compelling? What are the central contributions of—or glaring gaps in—his political thought to the American tradition?

4) Does the period leading up to and culminating in the Civil War reveal an American creed plagued by more fissures than ever before or simply deeper ones? Do the leaders of antebellum and wartime thought face notably more sources of disagreement than their Founding era predecessors (Week II)? Or has the ideological context of politics simply grown markedly more polarized and uncompromising?

5) How closely does the music of the 1860s track the values and rhetoric of abolitionist and unionist writing? Does the use of a different medium result in the emphasis of different values? Does it influence—for better or worse—the persuasive articulation of those values?

## V. Capitalism and Reformism (week of March 16)

CP: Horatio Alger, from *Ragged Dick* (1868)

KL: William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1884) – pp. 703-718

Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth” (1889) – pp. 730-737

Russell H. Conwell, “Acres of Diamonds” (1891) – pp. 737-740

CP: Pledge of Allegiance (1892)

KL: Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1889) – pp. 747-764

National People’s Party Platform (1892) – pp. 801-806

Lester Ward, “Sociocracy” (1893) – pp. 773-779

CP: A Workingman’s Prayer (1894)

KL: Henry Demarest Lloyd, *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (1894) – pp. 764-773

Lorenzo Dow Lewelling, “Speech at Huron Place” (1894) – pp. 806-809

Lester Ward, “Plutocracy and Paternalism” (1895) – pp. 779-785

William Jennings Bryan, The “Cross of Gold” Speech” (1896) – pp. 809-815

William Graham Sumner, “The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over” (1894) – pp. 719-724

William Graham Sumner, “The Challenge of Facts” (1895) – pp. 724-727

William Graham Sumner, “Consolidation of Wealth” (1902) – pp. 728-730

Eugene V. Debs, “Unionism and Socialism” (1904) – pp. 834-840

Emma Goldman, “Anarchism” (1907) – pp. 818-828

Samuel Gompers, *The American Labor Movement* (1914)– pp. 848-854

CP: Mark Twain, from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

KL: Booker T. Washington, Atlanta Exposition Address (1895) – pp. 946-950

Henry Brown and John Marshall Harlan, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) – pp. 942-946

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) – pp. 950-963

soundtrack: Brewster M. Higley and Daniel E. Kelley, “Home on the Range” (1876)

Ralph Chaplin, “Solidarity Forever” (1915)

1) Does William Graham Sumner belong in the pantheon of American political thinkers? What are his main contributions to the American political tradition? What is new about his thought? What is powerful about it?

2) Are the capitalist arguments of Sumner, Carnegie, and Conwell aberrant or typical in American political thought? Can we find substantive parallels—or just superficial ones—in nationalist (Week I), constitutionalist (Week II), or transcendentalist (Week III) thought? To what extent can we think of laissez faire economics as an application of core American political principles to the market?

3) Do the various would-be reformers—populists (Bryan), socialists (Debs), anarchists (Goldman), unionists (Gompers)—have meaningful intellectual traditions to draw upon in their critiques? Or does their reformist sensibility mark a significant break with American individualism and the classical liberalism that undergirds it?

4) To what extent and in what ways is post-bellum black political thought different from its antebellum counterpart? Did the end of slavery reshape or reify the values of black political thinkers? Did the rise of Jim Crow force new types of political arguments or compel the recourse to abolitionist ones?

5) What is the function of fiction in Gilded Age political thought? What role(s) do Alger, Bellamy, and Twain play in generating, reifying, refashioning, or contesting the prevailing ideals and overarching perspectives of the period?

## VI. Progressivism (week of April 6)

- KL: Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (1904) – pp. 988-992  
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906) – pp. 993-1000  
William James, *Pragmatism* (1907) – pp. 1024-1030  
Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909) – pp. 1002-1007  
Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (1909) – pp. 1065-1086  
Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism” (1910) – pp. 1086-1095  
CP: Theodore Roosevelt, “Who Is a Progressive?” (1912)  
Progressive Party Platform (1912)  
Woodrow Wilson, “The Meaning of Democracy” (1912)  
Woodrow Wilson, First Inaugural Address (1913)  
KL: Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom* (1913) – pp. 1102-1113  
CP: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Amendments (1913)  
KL: Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922) – pp. 1058-1064  
CP: Progressive Party Platform (1924)  
KL: John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) – pp. 1036-1052  
CP: John Dewey, “Creative Democracy” (1939)  
KL: W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Immediate Program of the American Negro” (1915) – pp. 969-973  
Hiram W. Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926) – pp. 980-985  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898) – pp. 872-877  
CP: David Brewer, *Muller v. Oregon* (1908)  
KL: Jane Addams, “If Men Were Seeking the Franchise” (1913) – pp. 877-882  
CP: Anna Howard Shaw, “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic” (1915)  
Nineteenth Amendment (1920)  
Theodore Roosevelt, “True Americanism” (1894)  
Horace M. Kallen, “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot” (1915)

soundtrack: John Phillips Sousa, “The Stars and Stripes Forever” (1897)

- slideshow: Thomas Nast, “The Brains”  
Thomas Nast, “William M. Tweed”  
Jacob Riis, “Room in a Tenement”  
Jacob Riis, “Tenement House Yard”  
Jacob Riis, “Lodgers in a Crowded Bayard Street Tenement”  
Jacob Riis, “Necktie Workshop in a Division Street Tenement”  
Jacob Riis, “Family Making Artificial Flowers”

1) Was there reasonable agreement about what it meant to be a “Progressive” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? Did, for example, Roosevelt and Wilson—presidents of different parties who nonetheless both professed to be adherents of Progressivism—agree on the key intellectual or political commitments inherent in Progressivism? Or was the label simply deployed opportunistically and without intellectual consistency?

2) How well do Progressive reformers and muckrakers such as Steffens, Sinclair, and Addams align with elected Progressive officials such as Roosevelt and Wilson? To what extent and in what ways do they share an approach to societal ills? A vision of public life? A conception of progress? Where does the thinking of the two groups overlap? Where does it diverge?

3) In what ways do public intellectuals like James, Dewey, and Lippman represent a distinct source of American political thinking? Do they offer a unique voice for political ideas? An innovative style of political argument? A novel framework for political debate? Are there meaningful intellectual forebears—in disposition, not in content—among the transcendentalists (Week III) or the capitalists (Week V)? Or do the Progressives offer something truly new here?

4) How might the Progressive embrace of experience and empirics make Progressivism a different kind—a different type, a different style, a different modality—of political thought? How might it make Sinclair a different kind of reformer? How might it make Wilson a different kind of politician? How might it make Dewey a different kind of theorist?

5) How should we reconcile the deeply inegalitarian strands of Progressive era political thought with the deeply democratic commitments of Progressivism? Are racist (Evans), sexist (Brewer), and nativist (Roosevelt) beliefs largely separable from or subtly interwoven with Progressive ideology? Are they perverting Progressivism or verbalizing unspoken aspects of it?

6) Should we consider Progressivism a monumental departure from the American political tradition? Did it discard established principles and values about the market or merely rein in the excesses caused by absolutist interpretations of those principles? Did it signal a new role for the citizenry in politics or merely offer a new vocabulary for thinking about that role?

7) To what extent was the Progressive promise of a more efficient, more energetic, and more equitable government a familiar one in American political thought? How does that promise relate to those made by Jefferson (Week II), Jackson (Week III), and Lincoln (Week IV)?

## VII. Liberalism (week of April 13)

- KL: Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (1922) – pp. 1133-1137  
Herbert Hoover, “Rugged Individualism” (1928) – pp. 1137-1141  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Speech at Oglethorpe University (1932) – pp. 1164-1170
- CP: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Speech Accepting the Democratic Nomination for President (1932)
- KL: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Commonwealth Club Speech (1932) – pp. 1170-1179  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address (1933) – pp. 1179-1183  
R.G. Tugwell, “The Principle of Planning and the Institution of...” (1932) – pp. 1191-1201  
Henry A. Wallace, *New Frontiers* (1934) – pp. 1201-1206
- CP: Huey Long, “Share Our Wealth” (1935)
- KL: John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935) – pp. 1156-1164  
Herbert Hoover, “The Challenge to Liberty” (1936) – pp. 1141-1144  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Annual Message to Congress (1936) – pp. 1184-1187  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “The Four Freedoms” (1941) – pp. 1187-1190  
Herbert Hoover, “The Fifth Freedom” (1941) – pp. 1144-1147  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “A Second Bill of Rights” (1944) – pp. 1190-1191  
Langston Hughes, “Let America Be America Again” (1938) – pp. 985-987
- CP: Adlai Stevenson, Speech to the American Legion Convention (1952)  
John F. Kennedy, First Inaugural Address (1961)  
Lyndon Baines Johnson, “Great Society” Speech (1964)  
Lyndon Baines Johnson, First State of the Union Address (1964)  
Lyndon Baines Johnson, Speech Before Congress on Voting Rights (1965)  
Lyndon Baines Johnson, Commencement Address at Howard University (1965)
- soundtrack: Blind Alfred Reed, “How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?” (1929)  
Bing Crosby, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” (1932)  
Irving Berlin, “God Bless America” (1938)  
Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit” (1939)  
Woody Guthrie, “I Ain’t Got No Home in This World Anymore” (1940)  
Pete Seeger, “All I Want” (1941)  
Woody Guthrie, “This Land is Your Land” (1944)
- slideshow: Walker Evans, “A.M. Burroughs”  
Walker Evans, “Floyd Burroughs and His Children”  
Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother”  
Isaac Soyfer, “Employment Agency”  
Grant Wood, “American Gothic”  
Grant Wood, “Death on the Ridge Road”  
Philip Evergood, “American Tragedy”  
Edward Hopper, “Morning in a City”  
Victor Arnautoff, “City Life”  
Norman Rockwell, “Four Freedoms”

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\* In person at WCMA!

\*\* In person at WCMA!

1) Does New Deal liberalism (as seen primarily but not exclusively in Roosevelt) mark the greatest “revolution” in American political thought since the Revolution (Week I) itself? How exactly does it remake the American political tradition?

2) Was New Deal liberalism more threatening to the existing political order than was Progressivism (Week VI)? Was it more threatening to capitalism? Was it more threatening to entrenched inegalitarianism? Which political movement threatened established powers more forcefully?

3) Is there a consistent strand of political thought connecting—and stretching through—New Deal and Great Society liberalism? Does Johnson share Roosevelt’s aspirations? Does he endorse his methodology for realizing those aspirations? How, if at all, does he modify or transform liberalism for the 1960s?

4) Does Franklin Roosevelt’s political thought have more in common with Jefferson’s (Weeks I and II), Jackson’s (Week III), or Lincoln’s (Week IV)? Or is his thinking *sui generis*?

5) To what extent do the sensibilities of New Deal era singers, photographers, and painters match the political approach of New Deal policymakers? Are artists (of various stripes) signaling a desire for the sort of “bold, persistent experimentation” that characterized Roosevelt’s vision and program? Or do their contributions evince a hesitation or ambivalence that political actors seem to ignore or reject?

## VIII. Activism and Radicalism (week of April 20)

- CP: Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (1955)  
Allen Ginsberg, “America” (1956)  
Jack Kerouac, from *On the Road* (1957)
- KL: C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left” (1960) – pp. 1273-1277  
Students for a Democratic Society, “The Port Huron Statement” (1962) – pp. 1290-1301  
Mario Savio, “An End to History” (1964) – pp. 1301-1305  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Nonviolence” (1957) – pp. 1305-1308  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963) – pp. 1308-1317  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963) – pp. 1317-1321
- CP: James Baldwin, from *The Fire Next Time* (1963)  
Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots” (1963)
- KL: Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964) – pp. 1322-1328  
Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics” (1965) – pp. 1328-1339  
Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation” (1966) – pp. 1339-1343
- CP: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam” (1967)
- KL: Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) – pp. 1344-1349  
National Organization for Women, Bill of Rights (1967) – pp. 1350-1351  
Redstockings Manifesto (1969) – pp. 1351-1353  
Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1970) – pp. 1362-1369  
Jerry Rubin, “A Yippie Manifesto” (1969) – pp. 1353-1362
- CP: Hunter S. Thompson, from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971)
- soundtrack: Pete Seeger, “We Shall Overcome” (1957)  
Peter, Paul, and Mary, “If I Had a Hammer” (1962)  
Peter, Paul, and Mary, “Tell It on the Mountain” (1963)  
Bob Dylan, “Blowin’ In the Wind” (1963)  
Bob Dylan, “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” (1963)  
Sam Cooke, “A Change is Gonna Come” (1964)  
Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam” (1964)  
Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’” (1964)  
Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone” (1965)  
Bob Dylan, “Subterranean Homesick Blues” (1965)  
Barry McGuire, “Eve of Destruction” (1965)  
The Byrds, “Turn! Turn! Turn!” (1965)  
Buffalo Springfield, “For What It’s Worth” (1967)  
Aretha Franklin, “Respect” (1967)  
Aretha Franklin, “Think” (1968)  
James Brown, “Say It Loud—I’m Black, and I’m Proud” (1968)  
Jimi Hendrix, “The Star Spangled Banner” (1969)  
Creedence Clearwater Revival, “Fortunate Son” (1969)  
Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, “Ohio” (1970)  
Johnny Cash, “Man in Black” (1971)  
Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On” (1971)  
Gil Scott-Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” (1971)  
Helen Reddy, “I Am Woman” (1972)

slideshow: Norman Rockwell, “The Problem We All Live With”  
John Filo, “Kent State University Massacre”  
Faith Ringold, “Die”

1) Where does the activism and radicalism of the 1960s fit within the American political tradition more broadly? Is it a sharp break with the paradigms of the past, an application of familiar principles to changing contexts, or something else entirely? Are their meaningful intellectual forebears of this period and these thinkers? Or just intellectual targets?

2) Aside from their opposition to the “establishment” (however we want to define it), in what ways do student activists, black civil rights leaders, and second-wave feminists embody a shared perspective? In what ways do they embody fundamentally different perspectives? Is it more appropriate to reconcile and weave them into a coherent ideology of the 1960s or to isolate them as distinctive threads of political discourse in the air at the same time?

3) What would Frederick Douglass (Week IV) and W.E.B. DuBois (Week V) have thought about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X? Would they have seen the 1960s black leaders as heirs to their legacies or apostates from them? Would they have been pleased or frustrated by where black political thinking had gone? Would they have viewed black political fortunes as stuck in the same struggles or confronted by new ones?

4) How do “Howl,” “America,” *On the Road*, and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* compare to previous incursions of poetry and literature into political thought? Are Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Thompson more or less “political” than Whitman (Week III), Stowe (Week IV), and Hughes (Week VII)? Are they more or less poignant in capturing a political moment with their craft? More or less pointed in making a political statement through their craft?

5) To what extent is the “democracy” of Students for a Democratic Society the “democracy” of either the revolutionaries, the transcendentalists, or the Progressives? How, if at all, does it change—improve, betray, or otherwise alter—the democratic visions of Jefferson (Week I), Whitman (Week III), or Dewey (Week VI)?

6) Were artists—literary, musical, visual—more enmeshed in and integral to political thought in the 1960s than at any other point in American history? How should we explain the depth of their activism? How should we assess the significance of their contribution? How does the presence of more non-governmental political thinkers influence the scope and nature of political debate in the 1960s?

## IX. Conservatism, Neoconservatism, and Libertarianism (week of April 27)

- KL: William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale* (1951) – pp. 1228-1231  
Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952) – pp. 1231-1235
- CP: The Pledge of Allegiance (1954)  
Russell Kirk, “The Essence of Conservatism” (1957)  
Ayn Rand, from *Atlas Shrugged* (1957)  
Norman Podhoretz, “The Know-Nothing Bohemians” (1958)
- KL: Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960) – pp. 1256-1263  
Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement” (1960) – pp. 1281-1282
- CP: Barry Goldwater, Speech Accepting the Republican Nomination for President (1964)  
Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing” (1964)
- KL: Irving Kristol, “Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism” (1973) – pp. 1381-1391  
Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977) – pp. 1406-1411  
Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Free to Choose* (1980) – pp. 1411-1426
- CP: Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address (1981)  
Ronald Reagan, Speech Accepting the Republican Nomination for President (1984)
- KL: Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) – pp. 1438-1449
- CP: Pat Buchanan, “The Cultural War for the Soul of America” (1992)
- KL: Pat Robertson, “A Portrait of America” (1993) – pp. 1464-1471
- CP: Contract With America (1994)  
Robert Bork, from *Slouching Toward Gomorrah* (1996)  
George W. Bush, Speech Accepting the Republican Nomination for President (2000)  
George W. Bush, First Inaugural Address (2001)  
Contract From America (2009)  
Paul Ryan, Response to State of the Union Address (2011)  
Ted Cruz, Speech at the Iowa Republican Party Ronald Reagan Dinner (2013)  
Marco Rubio, “Reclaiming the Land of Opportunity” (2014)  
Rand Paul, Speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (2014)
- soundtrack: Merle Haggard, “Okie from Muskogee” (1969)  
Merle Haggard, “The Fightin’ Side of Me” (1970)  
Lynyrd Skynyrd, “Sweet Home Alabama” (1974)  
Lee Greenwood, “God Bless the USA” (1984)  
Toby Keith, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” (2002)
- slideshow: Thomas E. Franklin, “Raising the Flag at Ground Zero”  
Jon McNaughton, “One Nation Under God”

1) Is there anything that ties together all the disparate threads of contemporary conservative thought? Is there an identifiable intellectual rubric that captures, among other things, the compassionate conservatism of Bush, the religiosity of Buchanan, and the capitalism of Ryan? Do these various constituencies have more or less in common with one another than did the assortment of activists and radicals in the 1960s (Week VIII)?

2) What explains the centrality of economics (to the exclusion of so much else) in contemporary conservative thought? To what extent are conservatives still fighting the battles of the New Deal

(Week VII)? How close are their views to those of Hoover (Week VII) or the capitalists of the late nineteenth century (Week V)?

3) How much of contemporary conservative thought can be traced to Barry Goldwater? Have subsequent thinkers remained faithful to his vision of the conservative movement? Have they harkened back to a conservative tradition antecedent to him? Have they pushed forward in new and different directions?

4) Does the political thought of Ronald Reagan measure up to his legacy as a conservative icon? Does he move the conservative mind substantially forward from the precepts outlined by Barry Goldwater? Does he lay meaningful groundwork for the perspective offered by George W. Bush? Or does he merely make Americans feel good about America again?

5) How should we conceptually map the intellectual terrain of American conservatism? Is modern conservative political thought better categorized by distinct ideational threads or discrete ideological phases? Is it defined more by perpetual conflicts or gradual evolution?

6) How direct a response is the conservative movement to the excesses (or even the core) of the 1960s? What are the central conservative objections to the 1960s? What are the key conservative solutions to the problems of the 1960s?

7) Is conservatism the first genuinely backward-looking ideological movement in American history? Has any other political tradition ever been so explicitly retrospective and so unapologetically restorationist? Has any other set of political thinkers ever been so eager to return to how things were as opposed to forge a new conception of how they ought to be?

## X. Multiculturalism, Neoliberalism, and Communitarianism (week of May 4)

- KL: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971) – pp. 1370-1381  
CP: Barbara Jordan, Address at the Democratic National Convention (1976)  
Mario Cuomo, Address at the Democratic National Convention (1984)  
KL: bell hooks, “Feminist Theory from Margin to Center” (1984) – pp. 1426-1433  
Michael Walzer, “What Does It Mean to Be an ‘American?’” (1990) – pp. 1449-1464  
CP: David Baker, “Patriotics” (1991)  
KL: Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993) – pp. 1471-1476  
CP: Bill Clinton, Remarks to the International Business Community (1994)  
Bill Clinton, Fourth State of the Union Address (1996)  
Bill Clinton, Second Inaugural Address (1997)  
KL: Richard Rorty, “A Cultural Left” (1998) – pp. 1494-1503  
Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (1999) – pp. 1503-1511  
Amitai Etzioni, “Communitarianism and the Moral Dimension” (2000) – pp. 1511-1522  
CP: Barack Obama, Address at the Democratic National Convention (2004)  
Barack Obama, Commencement Address at Knox College (2005)  
Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union” (2008)  
Barack Obama, Election Night Victory Speech (2008)  
Barack Obama, First Inaugural Address (2009)  
Wendell Berry, “The Work of Local Culture” (2011)  
video: Elizabeth Warren, Talking Tour on Fair Taxation and “Class Warfare” (2011)  
CP: Barack Obama, Remarks on the Economy (2011)  
Elizabeth Warren, Keynote Speech at Netroots Nation (2012)  
Richard Blanco, “One Today” (2013)  
Barack Obama, Second Inaugural Address (2013)  
Barack Obama, Remarks on Economic Mobility (2013)  
Elizabeth Warren, Remarks on the Government Shutdown (2013)  
Bill DeBlasio, Mayoral Inaugural Address (2014)  
Claudia Rankine, from *Citizen* (2014)
- soundtrack: Bruce Springsteen, “Born in the U.S.A.” (1984)  
Public Enemy, “Fight the Power” (1989)  
Rage Against the Machine, “Killing in the Name Of” (1992)  
Bruce Springsteen, “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995)  
Ben Sollee, “A Few Honest Words” (2008)

1) Is there anything that ties together all the disparate threads of contemporary liberal thought? Is there an identifiable intellectual rubric that captures, among other things, the feminism of hooks, the environmentalism of McKibben, and the communitarianism of Etzioni? Do these various constituencies have more or less in common with one another than did the assortment of activists and radicals in the 1960s (Week VIII)? Than did the amalgam of interests in contemporary conservative thought (Week IX)?

2) Is contemporary liberal political thought (as seen in Obama, Warren, and DeBlasio) more accurately described as “neopopulist” (Week V) or “neoprogressive” (Week VI)? Or is it a fusion of the two? (In which case, precisely what does it borrow from each?) Where do we see it going from here?

3) Can Bill Clinton's neoliberalism and Elizabeth Warren's neopopulism/neoprogressivism be reconciled? Looking back across the history of American political thought, which approach seems better positioned in the long-run?

4) Who are Barack Obama's intellectual and rhetorical heirs? Jefferson (Weeks I and II)? Whitman (Week III)? Lincoln (Week IV)? Dewey (Week VI)? Franklin Roosevelt (Week VII)? African-American activists in the Gilded Age (Week V) or the 1960s (Week VIII)? From where does he draw influence for the ideas—about democracy, about partisanship, about race, about inequality, about “hope and change”—that define his political identity?

5) Does late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century liberal thought represent an updating of New Deal liberalism or the forging of something new? How well would Franklin Roosevelt (Week VII) recognize liberalism in its current incarnation? What looks the same, and what looks different?

6) Is contemporary liberal thought responding to or shaping the concerns of contemporary conservative thought (Week IX)? Which side is dictating the direction of political discourse and setting the agenda for political action?

## Conclusion

- a. The Idea of America (May 12)
  - handout: Wilfred McClay, “Is America an Experiment?”
  - podcast: *The Gist*, “Baby Panda vs. George Washington”
- b. The Ideas of America: A Mini-Conference (TBD)