

American Political Theory (POT4204)

Classroom: Matherly 16 (MAT0016)

Meeting times: Tuesday Period 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM) & Thursday Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM)

Instructor

Glen M. Billesbach II,
PhD Candidate

Email

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Canvas Messenger

Office location & hours

Anderson Hall, 010, 2PM-4PM,
Tuesday/Thursday/By Appt.

Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the central traditions in American political thinking, from the Puritans to present. The first half concentrates on thinking up to the Civil War. The second half surveys the Civil War and important debates which follow. The primary focus of the course is on discerning the nature and historical vicissitudes of the American experiment in self-government. The deeper goal is to help you think critically about current political questions, and to help you become self-conscious about the positions you take with respect to them by reflecting upon the past.

Expectations

This is primarily a lecture course, but large segments of each session will be dedicated to discussion. To fully engage in these sessions, students are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to the lecture for which it is assigned. In addition to learning about American political thinking, we will be emphasizing three practices of political theory throughout this seminar. The first of these—and a primary practice of political theory—is close readings. Every week, you will have the responsibility of completing a worksheet designed to encourage interpretive and reflexive note-taking. The aim here is to learn to read and engage with texts thoughtfully and to make connections outside of the text. The second of these practices is asking good questions and you will be expected to generate questions as you progress through weekly readings. While these questions will likely stem from your notes and worksheets, they will encompass broader thematic elements of the week and be grounded in most, if not all, of the assigned readings. Lastly, we will focus on argumentation. In addition to the exams, you will be called upon to submit argumentative exercises throughout the semester that address the questions you have crafted in response to a week's readings. This practice will help refine your ability to construct persuasive arguments and foster deeper engagement with the course material.

Goals

1. To obtain a basic knowledge of American political thought from the founding to the present and acquire a sense of the historical trajectory of central ideas and traditions in the American experience.
2. To expand our ability to connect past to present, so that our arguments are better informed.
3. To conduct political dialogue with sympathy, critical attention, passion, and respect.
4. To strengthen our command of English prose through careful writing.

Required text

Texts provided on Canvas.

Assignment Schedule

Due Date	Subject	Details
Tuesdays/Thursdays	Attendance	10%- Graded on attendance percentage
Wednesdays 11:59 PM	13 Worksheets	25%- Instructions and details on Canvas
Fridays 11:59 PM	3 Writing Briefs	15%- Instructions and details on Canvas
October 12	Midterm Exam	20%- Rubric and instructions on Canvas
December 12	Final Exam	30%- Rubric and instructions on Canvas

Fall 2023 Course Schedule

Dates and Days	Subject
<u>Part 1: Colonial Era to Civil War</u>	
<u>Aug. 24- THURS</u>	Introduction to American Political Thought
<u>Aug. 29- TUES</u>	Framing Multiple Traditions and Experiences
<u>Aug. 31- THURS</u>	Framing Multiple Traditions and Experiences
<u>Sep. 5- TUES</u>	Puritanism, American Jeremiad, and The Protestant Ethic
<u>Sep. 7- THURS</u>	Puritanism, American Jeremiad, and The Protestant Ethic
<u>Sep. 12- TUES</u>	The Founding: From Revolution to Constitution
<u>Sep. 14 - THURS</u>	The Founding: From Revolution to Constitution
<u>Sep. 19 - TUES</u>	The Federalist Papers and The Antifederalists
<u>Sep. 21- THURS</u>	The Federalist Papers and The Antifederalists
<u>Sep. 26 - TUES</u>	Federalist and Jeffersonian Visions of America
<u>Sep. 28 - THURS</u>	Federalist and Jeffersonian Visions of America
<u>Oct. 3 - TUES</u>	Jacksonian Democracy and American Individualism
<u>Oct. 5 - THURS</u>	Jacksonian Democracy and American Individualism
<u>Oct. 10 - TUES</u>	No Class- Optional Exam Review
<u>Oct. 12 - THURS</u>	Midterm Exam

Part 2: Civil War- Today

<u>Oct. 17 - TUES</u>	Slavery and The Civil War
<u>Oct. 19 - THURS</u>	Slavery and The Civil War
<u>Oct. 24 - TUES</u>	Gilded Age Capitalism, Social Darwinism, and American Radicalism
<u>Oct. 26 - THURS</u>	Gilded Age Capitalism, Social Darwinism, and American Radicalism
<u>Oct. 31 - TUES</u>	American Empire, Race, and Gender
<u>Nov. 2 - THURS</u>	American Empire, Race, and Gender
<u>Nov. 7 - TUES</u>	The Progressives
<u>Nov. 9 - THURS</u>	The Progressives
<u>Nov. 14 - TUES</u>	The New Deal and Its Critics
<u>Nov. 16 - THURS</u>	The New Deal and Its Critics
<u>Nov. 21 - TUES</u>	The 1960s-1980s: Cultural Revolution and Backlash
<u>Nov. 23 - THURS</u>	No Class- Thanksgiving
<u>Nov. 28 - TUES</u>	The 1960s-1980s: Cultural Revolution and Backlash
<u>Nov. 30 - THURS</u>	The Future, Technology, and The Exercise of Freedom in America
<u>Dec. 5 - TUES</u>	The Future, Technology, and The Exercise of Freedom in America
<u>Dec. 7 - THURS</u>	No Class- Optional Exam Review
<u>Dec. 12 - TUES</u>	Final Exam

Information and Resources

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress visit [U Matter, We Care website.](#)
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website.](#)
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information or [visit the website.](#)
- *Writing Studio:* Excellent resource. Visit the website: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio>.
- *Academic Honesty:* Don't plagiarize. Check out the UF honor code [website.](#)
- Additional information and recourses can be found on Canvas.