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American Political Ideas: The Founders

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GOVT 402 SPRING 2000 Dr. Steven Alan Samson
American Political Ideas: The Founders Office: DeMoss 130
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Office Hours MWF 9-10; 1:15-2:15; T 9:30-11:30; by appointment

DESCRIPTION

The political thought of the Pilgrims, the Puritans, and the Founding Fathers, emphasizing the impact of Christianity upon American political ideas.

PURPOSE

1. Students will be introduced to key political and intellectual figures that helped shape the American political tradition at its founding.
2. Students will explore and evaluate the interplay of character, circumstance, and thought on the founding by examining primary as well as secondary sources.
3. Students will thereby be enabled to discern the elements of an American political theory that may be applied critically in reviewing current issues and events.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student is responsible for assigned readings and should keep a loose-leaf notebook of class materials.
2. Participation is an essential part of class. Reading assignments should be completed before the class meets. Be prepared to discuss readings and current events.
3. Class trips are planned for Monticello on February 3 and Montpelier on March 2. Carpooling will be arranged so that everyone may be accommodated.
4. Regular attendance is required. Persistent tardiness, lengthy absences, or erratic attendance will have a detrimental effect on grades. Three weeks of unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. If you expect to miss all or a substantial part of class, please notify me. Perfect attendance (no more than four tardies) is worth an extra grade level on one exam.
5. Students will be tested on the lecture and reading material through a series of three exams. The final grade will be determined by taking the average of the exam scores and the research papers, two copies of which should be submitted.
6. Exams should be taken at the scheduled date and time. Make-up exams must be taken in the testing center within five days except in case of a lengthy illness, which may be excused with a note from the doctor. After five days the student will lose one grade level on the exam.
7. The research project involves three phases of development. Each student will take responsibility for one of the founders, except George Washington. Preference will be given to such key figures as John Adams, Samuel Adams, Charles Carroll, John Dickinson, Oliver Ellsworth, Benjamin Franklin, Elbridge Gerry, Nathaniel Gorham, Alexander Hamilton, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, Rufus King, Richard Henry Lee, James Madison,

Luther Martin, George Mason, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris, James Otis, William Paterson, Charles Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Edmund Randolph, Benjamin Rush, John Rutledge, Roger Sherman, James Wilson, John Witherspoon, and Robert Yates. The first phase is to compile and write a 4-6 page bibliographic essay on primary and secondary sources by and about the founder [DUE DATE: February 29]. The second phase will involve reading and writing a 6-8 page review of a recent biography of the founder or a book from the recommended list [DUE DATE: March 30]. The third phase will be to contribute to classroom discussions of collateral readings and the roles played by the various founders. At least one classroom session will be devoted to a discussion of each founder, led in part by the students.

8. The grading scale is 100-90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D, 59 and below=F.

READING

Textbooks

Brookhiser, Richard. Founding Father [B]
McDonald, Forrest. American Presidency [M]
Samson, Steven. GOVT 402 Readings

Recommended

Bailyn, Bernard. The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967.
Banning, Lance. The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic, 1995.
Brookhiser, Richard. Alexander Hamilton, American, 1999.
Carey, George W. The Federalist: Design for a Constitutional Republic, 1989.
Collier, Christopher and James Lincoln. Decision at Philadelphia: The Constitutional Convention of 1787,1986.
Ellis, Joseph J. American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson, 1996.
_____. Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams, 1993.
Kirk, Russell. The Roots of American Order, 1974.
Lutz, Donald S. The Origins of American Constitutionalism, 1988.
_____. A Preface to American Political Theory, 1992.
Maier, Pauline. American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence, 1997.
Matthews, Richard K. If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason, 1995.
_____. The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View, 1984. [Supplemented by Peterson]
Mayer, Henry. A Son of Thunder: Patrick Henry and the American Republic, 1991.
Peterson, Merrill D. Adams and Jefferson: A Revolutionary Dialogue, 1978. [Supplemented by Matthews on Jefferson]
Smith, Richard Norton. Patriarch: George Washington and the New Nation, 1993.

SCHEDULE

FIRST WEEK: FOUNDLINGS AND FATHERS (1/20-25)

Required B. Introduction, Fathers; Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 1; Maier, American Scripture, Introduction; Lutz, Preface, ch. 4..

Collateral Wilder, "Covenantal Tradition."

SECOND WEEK: FEDERALISM: MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION ROOTS (1/27-2/1)

Required B. Nature; M. 1; Ellis, Cultures, ch. 9; Alvarado, "Fountainhead of Liberalism."

Collateral Morgan, Inventing, Origins, ch. 3; Bradford, Remembering, Part I.

THIRD WEEK: LEGAL BACKGROUND (2/3-8)

Required MONTICELLO (2/3) (May be canceled due to snow); B. Morals; M. 2.

Collateral Amos, Declaration, ch. 2;" Alvarado, Common Law, 6-8.

FOURTH WEEK: PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (2/10-15)

Required B. Ideas; M. 3; Lutz, Colonial Origins, Introductory Essay.

Collateral Elazar, "Federal Theology; Alvarado, Common Law, chs. 9-10.

FIFTH WEEK: COVENANTS AND COMMONWEALTHS (2/17-22)

Required M. 4; Lutz, Colonial Origins, nos. 3-8; 18-20, 22, 43.Mason, Free Government, II, 1-4; Lieber, "Rise of the Constitution," pp. 17-36.

Collateral Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, chs. 2-3;

SIXTH WEEK: COLONIAL EXPERIENCE (2/24-29)

Required M. 5; Samson, "Covenant Origins; Mason, Free Government, II, 5-6; Lieber, "Rise of the Constitution," pp. 36-63; ESSAY DUE (2/29)

Collateral Sandoz, Political Sermons, 4, 9, 11; Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 4

SEVENTH WEEK: MONTPELIER

MONTPELIER (3/2); FIRST EXAM (3/7)

EIGHTH WEEK: DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE (3/9-21)

Required Lieber, "Rise of the Constitution," pp. 64-85; Amos, Declaration, Introduction; Titus "Declaration;" Lutz, Origins, ch. 9; Drayton, "Charge;" Declaration of Independence.

Collateral Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 5; Maier, American Scripture, II, 3

NINTH WEEK: REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE (3/23-28)

Required B. War; M. 6; Adams, Jubilee Address, pp. 5-16; Jones, "Christianity."

Collateral Lutz**,** Origins, ch. 10; Lutz, Colonial, nos. 78, 80

TENTH WEEK: FRAMING THE CONSTITUTION (3/30-4/4)

Required B. Constitution; M. 7; Lutz, Origins, ch. 11; Adams, Jubilee Address, pp. 16-57; Lieber, "What Is Our Constitution?"
Collateral Bradford, Original Intentions, ch. 1; Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 6.

ELEVENTH WEEK: RATIFYING THE CONSTITUTION (4/6-11)
Required SECOND EXAM (4/6); M. 8; Lutz, Origins, ch. 12; Adams, Jubilee Address, pp. 57-76; Federalist, nos. 10, 39, 51; Letters from a Federal Farmer, nos. 1-2.
Collateral Morgan, Inventing, ch. 11; Bradford, Original Intentions, ch. 5.

TWELFTH WEEK: WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION (4/13-18)
Required B. President; M. 9; Adams, Jubilee Address, pp. 76-120; Lieber, "Washington and Napoleon."
Collateral; Forgie, Patricide, ch. 1; Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 7.

THIRTEENTH WEEK: FOUNDING FATHERS (4/20-25)
Required M. 10; B. Founding Father; Lincoln, "Lyceum Address."
Collateral Forgie, Patricide, ch. 2; Sheldon, Jefferson, chs. 1, 9;

FOURTEENTH WEEK: WRAP-UP (4/27)
Required B. Death; Lutz, Preface, ch. 6; THIRD EXAM
Collateral Kendall and Carey, Basic Symbols, ch. 8; McDonald, Constitutional History, ch. 9

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Bahnsen, Greg L. "Introduction to John Cotton's Abstract of the Laws of New England," Journal of Christian Reconstruction, 5 (Winter 1978-79): 75-81.
Bailyn, Bernard. Faces of the Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
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Boorstin, Daniel J. The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1948].
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_____. Original Intentions: On the Making and Ratification of the United States Constitution. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993.

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Brookhiser, Richard. Alexander Hamilton, American. New York: Free Press, 1999.
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Eidsmoe, John. Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987.
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Evans, M. Stanton. The Theme Is Freedom: Religion, Politics, and the American Tradition. Washington: Regnery, 1994.
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