

Department of Political Science

Fall Semester 2017
Classroom: Sage Hall 3221
Class: M, W 3:00-4:30pm
Office Hours: M, W 1:30-3:00pm

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Modern American Political Thought
Political Science 84-378 - 3.0 Credits

This course explores the key political ideas, themes, and decision points in American history from the New Deal to the present day. Its primary focus will be the ideas, values, and visions that shaped our political culture, the social forces that changed our institutions, and the core beliefs and ideology that sustain them. Although we will emphasize the major thinkers and successful social movements that shaped our early political experience, significant attention will also be given to those who dissented from the dominant patterns of U.S. political orthodoxy.

Signature Question: How do people understand and engage in community life?

Assigned Readings

Abbott, Philip. *Political Thought in America*.
Cummings, Michael. *American Political Thought*.
Additional readings available in-class or via the internet.

Course Learning Outcomes Students should be able to:

- Learn the normative and ethical components of American political thought
- Describe the critical political ideas and their impact on American policy.
- Understand the theoretical foundations of politics, parties and movements.
- Use history as a framework for understanding contemporary U.S. politics.
- Evaluate theories and accurately present them in arguments and analysis.

General Education Objectives

Liberal Education is an educational philosophy that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values and civic engagement. This Explore class should help to:

- contribute toward a liberal education of students by clarifying the manifold ways in which government and politics influences the quality of their lives and shapes their opportunities for personal success and self-actualization.
- prepare students for active citizenship by providing them with essential knowledge about the political process as well as useful participatory skills.

- provide a rigorous intellectual environment in which students are given analytical tools, learn research methods, and develop a capacity for clearly articulate their arguments, ideas, and values.

Course Outline

Topics:

Readings:

I.	Rise of the Positive State	
	A. Thought, Culture, Ideology	Abbott, Cummings Intros
	B. Depression Realignment	Abbott 7; Cummings IV
	C. First and Second New Deal	Cummings 52
	D. Impact of the Welfare State	Cummings 53
II.	Postwar Period and Cold War	
	A. World War and its Aftermath	Cummings 57
	B. Burdens of Globalism	Abbott 8
	C. <u>Mid-Term Examination</u>	Review
III.	New Industrial Order	
	A. Affluence and Fair Deal	Abbott 9; Cummings V 56
	B. New Frontier to Great Society	Cummings 58, 64, 65
	C. Civil Rights Revolution	Cummings 61, 67, 68
IV.	The Recent Present	
	A. Liberalism in Crisis	Cummings 59, 62, 63, 70, 73
	B. Emergence of Neo-Liberalism	Abbott 10; Cummings IV 74, 77, 78
	C. American Globalization	Abbott 11; Cummings VII 81, 91
	D. <u>Final Examination</u>	Review

Roughly two class periods will be devoted to each topic and the assigned readings.

Format

This is an upper-level course for advanced students. I will lecture but I also expect an in-depth class discussion and critical analysis of course materials.

Requirements

- 1) Examinations (60%): There will be two exams in this course, a mid-term and final. Both of these tests will include objective questions, short answers, and a major essay. The first exam is scheduled at mid-term on the seventh week of class and the final on the last day.
- 2) Term Paper (30%): A critical essay that examines the political thought of one or more of the major political figures covered by this class. Term papers should include both an exposition of the theory as well as an evaluation of the thinker's ideas. Your final paper should have a basic thesis statement, present arguments, evidence, and reasoning that support your assertions, and be at least 11-12 pages in length. You will need to submit your paper proposal for my approval at mid-term.
- 3) Participation (10%): Regular class attendance is mandatory. Students will also be expected to engage in the class discussions over the issues covered in each of the course sessions. Assessment of your classroom participation will be based on the quality of your observations, their frequency, and evidence that you have read and engaged the material. Repeated absences or silence during class expose you to a lower grade.

Political Science Majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore or first semester of their junior year. PS245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political Analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently.