

Freedom & Power

Introduction to US Politics (POLS 1211)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to US politics, with special attention on the political debates and dynamics in the 18th century that led the American colonies to fight a war for independence. The course is organized around two central themes--freedom and power--both central to US politics. By tracing the origins, development and consolidation of the 13 colonies into a united Republic, students will gain a better understanding of the political history of the US. Through course readings, videos, lectures, student presentations and classroom discussions, we will spend the next 15 weeks on a journey to better understand the nature and scope of US politics.

Some of the questions we will explore include: How does the past continue to influence the present? What is the relationship between slavery and freedom? How does power shape political decisions? What is the proper role of government (state or federal) in our lives? Where does political power come from? How have notions of freedom changed over time? Is an informed citizenry necessary in a democracy? What are the roles of citizens in a democratic state?

Course Goals

First, to provide students a comprehensive and critical introduction to the background history, cultural dynamics and political processes which led to the founding of the United States. Second, for students to become familiar with the major historical debates and issues which shaped the founding of the American Republic—issues such as liberty, slavery, taxation and representation. Finally, for students to be better able to critically evaluate and analyze contemporary political issues and debates shaping the nation, and form their own opinions on political matters.

Required Course Texts

Eric Foner. *The Story of American Freedom*. 1999

Jonathan Hennessey. *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*. 2008

Colin Woodard. *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*. 2012

**Additional course readings and online content will be posted to Blackboard.*

Optional Books

Diane Ravitch. *The American Reader: Words That Moved a Nation*. (2nd Edition). 2000.

Wootton, David. *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers*. 2003.

Policies and Procedures

Class Organization

- **Class Participation:** Students will be expected to have done all assigned reading before class and to take an active role in classroom discussions.
- **Group Presentations:** Students will be put into small groups, and each group will be responsible for leading a class discussion on readings from that week.
- **Short Essays:** Students will write 4 short essays in response to a reading or article.
- **Political Journal:** Students will keep a weekly journal reflecting on the issues and topics from the readings, classroom discussions, and current politics.
- **Final Paper:** The final will be an 8-10 page research paper on an issue in US politics.

Class Participation (10% of grade)

Students are expected to read and reflect on the assigned material before class, and to actively participate in class discussions in an informed and respectful way. Students are expected to bring all assigned readings with them each week to class.

Group Presentations (15% of grade)

Students will be divided into groups and each group will be asked to lead one class presentation. Each student in the group will be responsible for leading one part of the discussion, as well as preparing any handouts or summaries for class. Each group will have 20-30 minutes to present. Students will receive an overall group grade (10%) and an individual presentation grade (5%).

Short Essays (40% of grade)

Students will be asked to write four short essays (4 pages each) in response to course readings or a specific class topic. These essays will require students to critically reflect, analyze and respond to a specific political question or problem. Each essay will count for 10% of your grade.

Political Journal (10% of grade)

Students will be asked to keep a journal for the entire class, writing at least 2 pages per week each week. These journals are meant as a way to reflect on what you are reading on class, the issue raised during classroom discussions, plus any current political events that may be relevant to the materials being discussed and read. Grades are based on completing the weekly writing assignments only, and not on the content of the entries.

Final Research Paper (25% of grade)

Students will be asked to write an original academic research paper on a topic of their choosing, related to some issue in American Politics. Students will submit a draft outline of the proposed paper in advance to be approved by the professor. The paper should be 8-10 pages in length, with proper citations, 12 point font, double spaced, and 1" margins.

Class Attendance

More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction for the course. Coming to class significant late will count as one unexcused absence. More information concerning class absence policies is available in the Seton Hall [Student Handbook](#).

Exceptions for class absences are as follows:

- Personal illness or death in the immediate family (documentation required)
- Observance of a formal religious holiday
- Participation in university-sanctioned activity (documentation required)
- An act of nature or cosmic event making attendance impossible (flood, earthquake, zombie apocalypse, North Korean nuclear attack)

Assignment Due Dates

Any late assignments will have points deducted from the total. This is a firm policy, except for the extenuating circumstances noted above. There are no makeup assignments or extra credit papers. No credit will be given for any assignment more than 3 days late.

Use of Electronics in Class

All cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and put away during class. Laptops or tablets are allowed **only** if being used for note taking or referencing an e-book. Ignoring this policy may result in a reduced letter grade for this course. Your friends can wait an hour for your SMS reply. Facebook does not constitute active class participation. Improper use of electronics is grounds for a reduced class participation grade and/or overall class grade.

Office Hours

Students who wish to meet with me can either speak to me before or after class or e-mail me to schedule a time to meet during regular office hours.

Communications

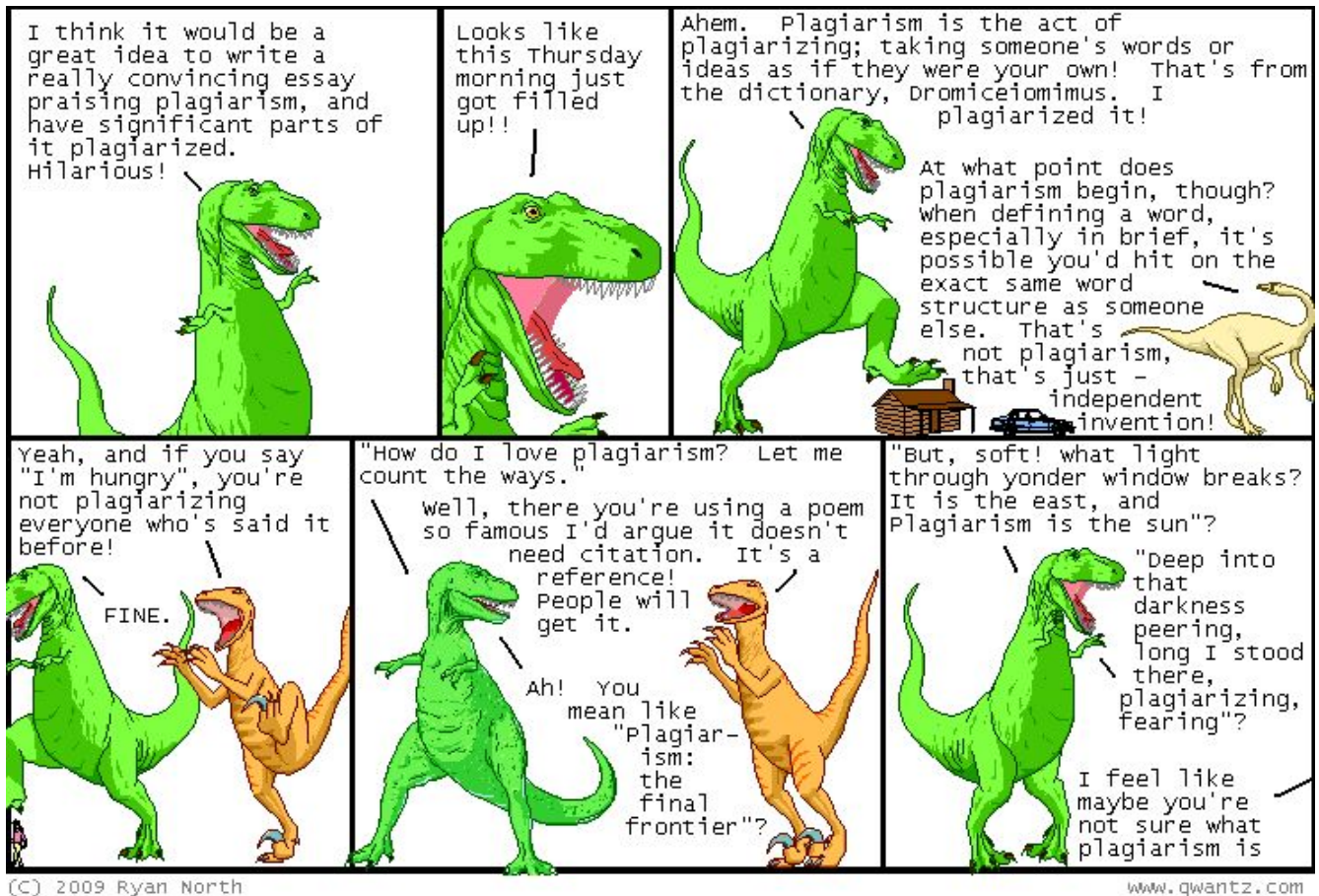
I will try to respond to all emails within 48 hours. If for some reason you do not receive a reply after two days, please send a follow up email.

Writing Help

Students needing additional writing help should contact the Writing Center, located in the Walsh Library, rooms 304, 310 and 316. More info is available at: www.shu.edu/writing-center/

Disability Support

The professor will make every effort to accommodate any special needs students may have in the classroom. Students who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University per the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To access these services, students must visit the Office of Disability Support Services to provide documentation and receive an accommodation plan. <https://www.shu.edu/disability-support-services/>



Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a sign of intellectual laziness. Students found guilty of plagiarism risk an F for the course. Seton Hall's statement on plagiarism is under [Academic and Professional Integrity](#):

"All forms of dishonesty, whether by act or omission, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism and knowingly furnishing false information to the University, are prohibited. University sanctions may extend to suspension and dismissal...The presentation of another's work as one's own is a serious violation of the academic process, and it is penalized accordingly. The decision on the appropriate penalty is in the first instance the professor's, and it may extend to a failing grade for the course."

Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to treat each other and the professor with courtesy, and refrain from any personal attacks. Due to the nature of political disagreements, arguments may emerge from time to time over deeply-held convictions. Students are encouraged to express their beliefs and convictions, but must do so respectfully, and without insulting or attacking fellow classmates. Any discriminatory remarks, personal attacks or threats will not be tolerated, and students will be asked to leave the class if they cannot respect their peers.

----- Part I: The Early Republic -----

Week 1 (8/28 and 8/30): Welcome & Course Introduction

Monday (8/28) will be our first class. Hand out course syllabus and review goals, organization and materials for class. Introduction by students and professor.

Readings:

American Nations - Introduction (pgs 1-19)

Story of American Freedom – Introduction (pgs xiii-xxii)

!! Note: No Class on Monday (9/4) – Labor Day !!

Week 2 (9/4 and 9/6): Founding Moments

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 1-5: Founding El Norte; Founding New France; Founding Tidewater; Founding Yankeedom; Founding New Netherlands (pgs 23-72)

Writing Assignment #1 - Handed out Wednesday

Week 3 (9/11 and 9/13): Colonial Subjects or Free People?

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 6-9: The Colonies' First Revolt; Founding the Deep South; Founding the Midlands; Founding Greater Appalachia (pgs 73-111)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 1: The Birth of American Freedom (pgs 3-28)

Writing Assignment #1 - Due in class Wednesday

Week 4 (9/18 and 9/20): The Politics of Rebellions

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 10-12: A Common Struggle; Six Wars of Liberation; Independence or Revolution? (pgs 115-149)

US Constitution Graphic Novel – (pgs 1-87)

Watch:

Liberty! The American Revolution - Episodes 1-3: The Reluctant Revolutionaries, Blows Must Decide, The Times That Try Men's Souls

Week 5 (9/25 and 9/27): Constitutional Politics

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 13-14: Nations in the North; First Secessionists (pgs 150-172)

US Constitution Graphic Novel – (pgs 88-141)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 2: To Call It Freedom (pgs 29-46)

Watch:

John Adams - Episodes 5-6: Unite or Die, Unnecessary War

Writing Assignment #2 - Handed out Monday

Week 6 (10/2 and 10/4): Expansion and Consolidation

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 15-17: Yankeedom Spreads West; Midlands Spread West; Appalachia Spreads West (pgs 173-200)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 3-4: An Empire of Liberty; Boundaries of Freedom in the Young Republic (pgs 47-94)

Writing Assignment #2 - Due in class Monday

!! Note: No Class on Monday (10/9) – Fall Break !!

Week 7 (10/9 and 10/11): Conflicting Freedoms

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 18-21: Deep South Spreads West; Conquering El Norte; Founding the Left Coast; War for the West (pgs 200-242)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 5: A New Birth of Freedom (pgs 95-114)

Writing Assignment #3 - Handed out Monday

----- Part II: One Nation? Unity and Division -----

Week 8 (10/16 and 10/18): Free to Be?

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 22-23: Founding the Far West; Immigration and Identity (pgs 243-262)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 6-7: Liberty of Contract and Its Discontents; Progressive Freedom (pgs 115-162)

Writing Assignment #3 - Due in class Monday

Week 9 (10/23 and 10/25): Who Fights for Freedom?

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 24: Gods and Missions (pgs 263-273)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 8-9: Birth of Civil Liberties; New Deal and the Redefinition of Freedom (pgs 163-218)

*****First Draft of Final Paper Proposal due Wednesday (11/1)*****

Week 10 (10/30 and 11/1): A War of Worlds

Readings:

Story of American Freedom – Ch 10-11: Fighting for Freedom; Cold War Freedom (pgs 219-274)

Writing Assignment #4 - Handed out Monday

Week 11 (11/6 and 11/8): The Rebels Strike Back

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 25: Culture Clash (pgs 274-284)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 12: Sixties Freedom (pgs 275-306)

Writing Assignment #4 - Due in class Monday

*****Revised Draft Paper Proposal due Monday (11/13)*****

Week 12 (11/13 and 11/15): Return of the Conservative

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 26: War, Empire, and the Military (pgs 285-294)

Story of American Freedom – Ch 13: Conservative Freedom (pgs 307-332)

!! Note: No class in Week 13 (11/20 - 11/22) – Thanksgiving

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Week 13 (11/20 and 11/22): Sacrifice of the Turkeys

*Professor Crews will be gone on 11/20, and 11/22 is Thanksgiving break. Enjoy the week off!

Week 14 (11/27 and 11/29): Whither Goes the Republic?

Readings:

American Nations – Ch 27-28, Epilogue: The Struggle for Power I: The Blue Nations; The Struggle for Power II: The Red and the Purple; Epilogue (pgs 295-322)

Week 15 (12/4 and 12/6): Review Week

Review themes from semester. Reflect on what we have learned about freedom, power and the origins and development of politics and the political cultures of the US.

!! Finals Week !!

Week 16 (12/11 and 12/13): Finals

Last day of class Monday 12/11.

Final papers due in class Wednesday **December 13**.