

AMERICAN CONSERVATISMS

Overview:

This Freshman Seminar explores varieties of conservative political thought in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. Readings include defenses of agrarian, antimodern, libertarian, traditionalist, and neoconservative perspectives, as well as historical scholarship that situates these arguments in their economic, political, social, cultural, and intellectual contexts.

Assignments:

- 10%: Online posts (6 paragraph-long responses)
- 10%: In-class presentation (10 minutes)
- 10%: Political autobiography (4–5 pages)
- 15%: Historiographic paper (5–7 pages)
- 25%: Research paper (7–10 pages)
- 30%: Participation

Online posts: Each week, the instructor will post 3 or 4 questions on the course discussion board. All students are expected to post a paragraph-long (6–10 sentences) response to one of these questions prior to the meeting on 9/17, and 5 times thereafter. Responses should be submitted by 10:00pm on the Sunday night before the relevant meeting.

In-class presentation: Each student will be requested to pick a reading to introduce to the class with a 10-minute presentation. The presentation should situate the reading within the author's body of work, share insights from historians about the author and movement under discussion, and raise questions or present arguments that will help to get the discussion of the text underway. Students should email the instructor with a ranked list of their four top preferences after the first meeting; assignments will be distributed on 9/24.

Political autobiography: This assignment asks students to write a short paper that subjects their own ideological development to a critical analysis comparable to that adopted by scholars writing about a historical figure. What economic, social, cultural, and/or intellectual forces have contributed to the shaping of your political outlook? It should be written in the first person, and does not need to be comprehensive: you can focus only on major events and influences. This paper will be due on 9/28.

Historiographic paper: This assignment asks students to examine how historians have written about a topic of their choice in the history of American conservatism, and to suggest some of the limitations of current treatments and areas for possible future research. Its tone and mode of analysis can be modeled on a review essay in a literary journal (*The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, etc). This paper will be due on 11/2.

Research paper: This assignment asks students to write an original research paper about a topic of their choice in the history of American conservatism. Students will be expected to draw on existing scholarship on the topic (academic articles and/or books), and to rely on original sources (such as books, newspaper and magazine articles, and/or archival documents from the period). This paper will be due on 12/7.

Course policies:

Paper submission: Papers should be submitted via the “Assignments” tab on the course website before 5:00pm on the due date.

Office hours: All students are expected to attend the instructor’s office hours at least once during the semester.

Late papers: The grades of late papers will be lowered one level for each day they are late (e.g., a grade of B becomes a B- if submitted within one day of the due date, a C+ if submitted within two days of the due date, etc.).

Ethics: In this course, you are expected to be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board Web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>) for more information.

Disabilities: Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Texts:

The readings for this course will be available on electronic reserve; check under the “E-Reserves” tab on the course website.

MEETINGS

Monday, September 10: Introduction

Monday, September 17: Meanings of Conservatism

- Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Regnery, 2001), pp. 3–11.
- Friedrich Hayek, “Why I am not a Conservative,” in *The Constitution of Liberty* (University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 397–414.
- Samuel Huntington, “Conservatism as an Ideology,” *American Political Science Review* 51, no. 2 (1957), pp. 454–473.

- Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3–40.
- Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (1994), pp. 409–429.

Monday, September 24: Conservatism in a Liberal Society

- John C. Calhoun, “A Disquisition on Government,” *Union and Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun* (Liberty Fund, 1992), pp. 3–78.
- Louis Hartz, “The Reactionary Enlightenment,” in *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Harcourt, 1955), pp. 145–177.
- Michael O’Brien, *Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810–1860* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), pp. 191–258.

*** Friday, September 28th, 5:00pm: POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHERS DUE ***

Monday, October 1: Against Modernity

- Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Houghton Mifflin, 1918), ch. 1, 4, 22, 25, 31, 33–35.
- T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 261–297.

Monday, October 8: Varieties of Agrarianism

- “Introduction: A Statement of Principles,” John Crowe Ransom, “Reconstructed but Unregenerate,” and Frank Lawrence Owsley, “The Irrepressible Conflict,” in *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Louisiana State University Press, 1930), pp. xxxvii–xlvi, 1–28, and 61–91.
- Wendell Berry, “The Whole Horse,” in *The Art of the Common-place: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Counterpoint, 2002), pp. 236–248.
- Paul Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 1–10, 11–30, 114–150.

Tuesday, October 16: Cold War Anticommunism

- Whittaker Chambers, “Foreword in the Form of a Letter to my Children,” in *Witness* (Random House, 1952), pp. 3–12.
- Joseph McCarthy, “Speech at Wheeling, West Virginia,” 9 February 1950, in Ellen Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), pp. 238–241.
- Richard Hofstadter, “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt—1954” and “Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited—1965,” in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (Vintage, 2008), pp. 41–92.
- Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Little, Brown, 1998), pp. ix–xviii, 45–52, 368–415 (and notes on pp. 431–432, 442–444, 535–550).
- Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (M.I.T. Press, 1967), pp. 216–260, 326–335.

Monday, October 22: Market Advocacy and the New Deal State

- Albert Jay Nock, *Our Enemy, the State* (W. Morrow, 1935), parts 1, 6.
- Ayn Rand, “Man’s Rights,” in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New American Library, 1964).
- Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 7–21.
- Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits,” *New York Times Magazine*, 13 September 1970, pp. 32–33, 122–126.
- Jennifer Burns, “Godless Capitalism: Ayn Rand and the Conservative Movement,” *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 3 (2004), pp. 1–27.

Monday, October 29: Capitalism and Tradition

- “Publisher’s Statement,” *National Review*, 19 November 1955, p. 5.
- Friedrich Hayek, “Individualism: True and False,” in *Individualism and Economic Order*, pp. 1–32.
- Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Regnery, 2001), pp. 12–70, 457–501.
- Frank S. Meyer, “Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism,” in *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (Liberty Fund, 1996), pp. 14–29.

*** Friday, November 2nd, 5:00pm: HISTORIOGRAPHIC PAPERS DUE ***

Monday, November 5: The Grass-Roots Right

- Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Victor, 1960), pp. 9–23.
- Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing,” 27 October 1964.
- John Birch Society, *Blue Book*, sections I and II.
- Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 147–186.

Monday, November 12: The Neoconservative Imagination

- Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 3–25.
- Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 78–94.
- Irving Kristol, “An Autobiographical Memoir” and “The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals,” in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Free Press, 1995), pp. 3–42, 106–122.
- Justin Vaisse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Belknap, 2010), pp. 1–20, 50–80.

Monday, November 19: Certainty in a Secular Age

- Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 1–17, 35–51.

- Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness,” in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 160–181.
- Robert Nisbet, “The Problem of Community,” in *The Quest for Community* (Oxford University Press, 1953).
- Darren Dochuk, “Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical: From FDR to Ronald Reagan,” in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 297–326.

Monday, November 26: Race, Gender, and the Emerging Republican Majority

- Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Arlington, 1969), pp. 25–42, 461–474.
- Angela Dillard, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York University Press, 2001), pp. 1–23, 56–98.
- Kevin Kruse, “The Politics of Race and Public Space: Desegregation, Privatization and the Tax Revolt in Atlanta,” *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 5 (2005), pp. 610–633.

Monday, December 3: Conservatism and the Culture Wars

- Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 24–46, 62–81, 313–382.
- Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 144–179.
- Sam Tanenhaus, *The Death of Conservatism* (Random House, 2009), pp. 3–27.

*** Friday, December 7, 5:00pm: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE ***