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


**Monday, September 24: Conservatism in a Liberal Society**


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

**Monday, October 1: Against Modernity**


**Monday, October 8: Varieties of Agrarianism**


**Tuesday, October 16: Cold War Anticommunism**

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

- Albert Jay Nock, *Our Enemy, the State* (W. Morrow, 1935), parts 1, 6.

Monday, October 29: Capitalism and Tradition

- “Publisher’s Statement,” *National Review*, 19 November 1955, p. 5.

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

Monday, November 5: The Grass-Roots Right

- John Birch Society, *Blue Book*, sections I and II.

Monday, November 12: The Neoconservative Imagination


Monday, November 19: Certainty in a Secular Age


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


Monday, December 3: Conservatism and the Culture Wars

• Sam Tanenhaus, The Death of Conservatism (Random House, 2009), pp. 3–27.

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