

Politics and Culture

Professor Anthony Grasso
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Hybrid Online Course
Class Time: T/TH, 3:35-4:55
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview

What is American political culture? Through U.S. history, scholars and citizens have constantly debated what it means to be “American” and who fully counts as “American.” This course will explore crucial themes in the development of American political culture from the Founding to modern era. In doing so, we will engage with the following sorts of questions: How has American politics defined citizenship and belonging at different times in American history? How has the historical development of American political culture conditioned how people understand what it means to be “American” today? What are the various values, beliefs, and ideologies that constitute American political culture? How have these various and often conflicting values, beliefs, and ideologies interacted over time? Why have these ideas worked to promote egalitarian policies at some times but inequality at others? How do these conflictual dynamics of American political culture interact today?

This course is not meant to serve as an exhaustive overview of all elements of American political culture. We will explore many themes in this course, including class, gender, and racial inequality; social and economic policy; citizenship and identity; federalism; constitutionalism; and American political thought. Each of these themes could easily be the focus of their own respective course in relation to political culture. Rather, is the aim of this course to offer provocative perspectives into how American political culture is best conceived of as a collection of intertwined and conflicting ideals and values that have shaped American political development over time. The course is designed to equip you with critical tools and perspectives enabling you to more systematically analyze broad questions about American political ideals and values, disputes over those ideals and values, and how those ideals and values interact, clash, and produce change over time.

Course Grading Scale

	Letter Grade	Percentage	Interpretation
Excellent	A	89.5-100	Mastery of concepts. Can clearly apply concepts to new situations.
Above Average	B+ B	84.5 – 89.49 79.5 – 84.49	Strong understanding of concepts. Acceptable foundation for future work.
Proficient	C+ C	74.5 – 79.49 69.5 – 74.49	Basic understanding. Questionable foundation for future work.
Marginal	D	59.5-69.49	Weak understanding and foundation for future work.
Failure	F	<59.5	Clearly failed to demonstrate understanding.

Some Notes About Online Learning

What follows are a few notes about how this course will be conducted online:

- The course will consist of a combination of asynchronous lessons and live synchronous meetings. Pay attention to the Lesson Schedule in this syllabus, as the live sessions are spread throughout the semester without a fixed pattern. Since our schedule does not cleanly alternate between asynchronous and live sessions, make sure to follow the schedule closely.
- When we do have live sessions, please come prepared to speak about the material. We will not only be speaking about the material assigned for that day, but for all of the asynchronous lessons since our last live meeting. If you cannot make a live discussion you must give me a reason to excuse the absence, in which case you can make up the missed class through a makeup assignment (see below).
- During class keep your microphone off and only turn it on if you are called on to speak. Use the raise your hand function on Zoom if you would like to speak.
- The chat function should only be used to ask clarification questions about the material. If you have a more complex question – especially one that may provoke discussion or be met with competing responses and opinions – use the hand raise function so I can call on you to speak.
- Be flexible. I am ready to adapt our lessons dependent on how things go.

Course Assignments and Graded Events

Throughout the course there will be multiple graded assignments which assess your knowledge of the material and ability to critically analyze and apply concepts discussed.

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENTAGE OF GRADE
Synchronous Participation	5%
Asynchronous Assignments	10%
Paper 1	25%
Paper 2	25%
Final Paper	35%

Participation (5%): This course will occasionally meet synchronously as a discussion-driven seminar. On such days, participation is key to success and I expect all students to contribute in ways that reflect a strong understanding of the course material. Understand that I grade your participation from 0-10 each day. At the end of the semester I average your daily scores to determine your overall participation score (e.g. an average of 9.4/10 receives a 94% participation score).

Live sessions will be recorded. For those who miss our live sessions, you must provide me a reason for your absence to get it excused. Adjusting to online learning is difficult and I understand that everyone is dealing with obstacles in their schedule. If your absence is excused, you will then have the opportunity to make up participation with alternative assignments that will require you to watch the recorded lesson and write an accompanying reaction paper. If your absence is unexcused you won't

be eligible for the makeup assignment, so if you have an unexcused absence and do not complete a makeup assignment you will get a 0/10 for the day for participation.

If the quality of our discussion falters, I will resort to alternative mechanisms for testing your comprehension, including more involved writing assignments or reading quizzes to gauge your understanding of the material.

Asynchronous Assignments (10%): For recorded lessons, you will have accompanying assignments. These will be a combination of written assignments responding to specific questions, discussion board posts, and/or reading quizzes taken through Canvas.

Paper 1 (25%): There will be one paper assignment due at the end of Module 1 related to the course material we study. It must be 1,600-2,000 words in length (excluding notes and bibliography).

Paper 2 (25%): There will be one paper assignment due at the end of Module 2 related to the course material we study. It must be 1,600-2,000 words in length (excluding notes and bibliography).

Final Paper (35%): There will be a final paper in lieu of an exam at the end of the semester. The final paper will be comprehensive in its analysis, incorporating material from the entire course in your analysis. It must be 2,000-3,000 words in length (excluding notes and bibliography).

Administrative Standards

Academic Integrity: All Rutgers students are expected to abide by the University's academic integrity standards. Each student should review the academic integrity standards, available on the Rutgers Academic Integrity website. For this class you may use any generally recognized style manual to format your citations (Chicago Manual of Style, MLA Style Guide, APA Style Guide). It is strongly suggested that you use Rutgers Library's RefWorks platform for citation. See the current Academic Integrity Policy here: <https://policies.rutgers.edu/10213-currentpdf>

Plagiarism: There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism in this class. Academic dishonesty is a severe offense, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. All source material **MUST** be cited when presenting someone else's words or ideas. If you have any questions about citing source material, please speak to me. I would much rather correct any accidental errors in citation and attribution ahead of time rather than address them after turning in an assignment.

Readings and Class Prep: Students should attend class prepared to thoroughly discuss the lesson's readings and must have access to the assigned readings with them during class. As noted, if in-class discussion falters, I will create in-class quizzes to count towards participation.

Absences: Students who miss class should make a reasonable effort to contact me before synchronous sessions. Without appropriate documentation your absence will count as unexcused and you receive a 0 for your daily participation score and be ineligible to makeup the lesson by watching the recorded session and completing the assignment. Any absence that prevents you from completing a graded requirement such as an exam cannot be counted as your automatic excused absence and requires documentation ahead of a makeup, otherwise your grade will be penalized.

Late Submissions: If you anticipate turning in an assignment late, email me immediately and inform me when you anticipate turning it in. In the absence of extenuating circumstances or documentation to excuse it, you will be deducted ten percent for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Writing Standards: The ability to write clearly and articulately is an important skill. As such, your writing in this course will be evaluated against several dimensions of good writing. This means I will not only evaluate the substance of your paper – meaning persuasiveness, factual accuracy, strong use of evidence, and critical and intelligent thought – but I will also give you feedback on your writing style. In your written work, you should pay attention to organization and presentation, writing tone, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and proper citations and documentation. All writing should conform to a standardized citation format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Whichever is fine, but please remain consistent in your writing. All papers should be typed in 11- or 12-point of a standard font (Times New Roman, Arial, Cambria, etc.) with standard 1-inch margins.

Disabilities: Any student in need of classroom accommodations due to disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services as soon as possible: (856) 225-6442, Fax: (856) 225-6443 or at the Rutgers-Camden Learning Center, Armitage Hall, Room 231. **No accommodations can be made without the explicit approval of the Office of Disability Service.**

Course Readings and Required Texts

This course requires five books, all of which are available through the campus bookstore. You can buy the books used online as well. Additional readings will be available through the Canvas site.

- Morone, James. *The Devils We Know: Us and Them in America's Raucous Political Culture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2014). ISBN: 978-0700621422
- Rios, Victor. *Human Targets: Schools, Police, and the Criminalization of Latino Youth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). ISBN: 978-0226090993
- Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). ISBN: 978-0300078770
- Spence, Lester. *Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics* (New York: Punctum Books, 2015). ISBN: 978-0692540794

Lesson Schedule

Block 1 – The Lessons of America’s Early Citizenship Laws

Lesson 1	19-Jan	Course Introduction	Asynchronous
Lesson 2	21-Jan	The Multiple Traditions	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 3	26-Jan	The Revolution and Constitution	Asynchronous
Lesson 4	28-Jan	The White Republic	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 5	2-Feb	The Civil War	Asynchronous
Lesson 6	4-Feb	Reconstruction	Asynchronous
Lesson 7	9-Feb	The Gilded Age	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 8	11-Feb	Take Home Paper 1.	NO CLASS

Block 2 – Belonging and Exclusion in the 20th Century

Lesson 9	16-Feb	The Progressive Era	Asynchronous
Lesson 10	18-Feb	Race and Eugenics	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 11	23-Feb	The New Deal	Asynchronous
Lesson 12	25-Feb	The Civil Rights Era	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 13	2-Mar	The Southern Strategy	Asynchronous
Lesson 14	4-Mar	The Reagan Revolution	Asynchronous
Lesson 15	9-Mar	Modern Cultural Conservatism	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 16	11-Mar	Take Home Paper 2.	NO CLASS

Block 3 – Modern Debates in Politics and Culture

Lesson 17	23-Mar	Morality and Politics	Asynchronous
Lesson 18	25-Mar	Class and Politics	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 19	30-Mar	Race and Economics I	Asynchronous
Lesson 20	1-Apr	Race and Economics II	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 21	6-Apr	Culture and Punishment I	Asynchronous
Lesson 22	8-Apr	Culture and Punishment II	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 23	13-Apr	MEDIA 1 (TBD)	Asynchronous
Lesson 24	15-Apr	MEDIA 2 (TBD)	Asynchronous
Lesson 25	20-Apr	MEDIA 3 (TBD)	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 26	22-Apr	MEDIA 4 (TBD)	Asynchronous
Lesson 27	27-Apr	MEDIA 5 (TBD)	LIVE (Zoom)
Lesson 28	29-Apr	Course Conclusion	LIVE (Zoom)

*The final 5 lessons before the conclusion are subject to change dependent on availability of particular resources through the library, but these lessons will consist of films, documentaries, and podcasts relevant to the course material. I plan to assign films and documentaries tailored to the class’s interests.

BLOCK 1: The Lessons of America's Early Citizenship Laws

1. Course Introduction: The American Experiment
 - Syllabus.
 - Morone, *The Devils We Know*, Introduction and chapter 1
2. The Multiple Traditions
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, Introduction and chapter 1
3. The Revolution and Constitution
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, chapters 3 and 5
4. The White Republic
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, Chapter 8
5. The Civil War
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, Chapter 9
6. Reconstruction
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, Chapter 10
7. The Gilded Age
 - Smith, *Civic Ideals*, Chapter 11
8. **NO CLASS – TAKE HOME PAPER.**

BLOCK 2: Belonging and Exclusion in the 20th Century

9. The Progressive Era
 - Rogers Smith, “The Progressive Seedbed: Claims of American Political Community in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries,” in *The Progressives’ Century: Political Reform, Constitutional Government, and the Modern American State*, eds. Stephen Skowronek, Stephen Engel, and Bruce Ackerman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 264-285
10. Race and Eugenics
 - Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban American* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 35-88.
11. The New Deal
 - Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 91-134
12. The Civil Rights Movement

- Frank, Thomas, *The People, NO: A Brief History of Anti-Populism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), pp. 169-195.
 - “Malcolm X’s Legendary Speech: The Ballot or the Bullet (annotations and subtitles),” *YouTube*, June 7, 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLQLUpNGsc>>
13. The Southern Strategy
- Russ Bynum, “At RNC, GOP echoes racial code of Nixon’s 1968 Campaign,” *Associated Press News*, August 27, 2020, <<https://apnews.com/article/f09ab43bd4232894b0e041f1a5d97f53>>
 - The Nation, “Exclusive: Lee Atwater’s Infamous 1981 Interview on the Southern Strategy,” *YouTube*, Nov. 13, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_8E3ENrKrQ>
 - Alabama Department of Archives & History, “George Wallace 1963 Inauguration Address,” *YouTube*, February 25, 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0EjsUbDU>>
 - Richard Nixon Foundation, “Richard Nixon Accepts the 1968 Republican Presidential Nomination,” *YouTube*, Nov. 30, 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Km1Ylrjog74>>
14. The Reagan Revolution
- Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 187-216
 - ReaganFoundation Reagan, “‘A Time for Choosing’ by Ronald Reagan,” *YouTube*, April 2, 2009, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXBswFfh6AY>>
15. Modern Cultural Conservatism
- Frank, Thomas, *The People, NO: A Brief History of Anti-Populism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), pp. 196-222
 - Frum, David, “Populism Without Popularity: The Republican Party now has two paths forward,” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 15, 2020, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/gop-has-two-paths-forward/617105/>>
 - NBC News, “President Donald Trump’s Inaugural Address (Full Speech),” *YouTube*, Jan. 20, 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThtRvBUBpQ4>>
16. NO CLASS – TAKE HOME PAPER.

BLOCK 3: Modern Debates in Politics and Culture

17. Morality and Politics
- **Morone**, *The Devils We Know*, chapters 5-8
18. Class and Politics
- **Morone**, *The Devils We Know*, chapters 9-11

19. Race and Economics I
 - **Spence, *Knocking the Hustle***, foreword and chapters 1-3
20. Race and Economics II
 - **Spence, *Knocking the Hustle***, chapter 4-conclusion
21. Culture and Punishment I
 - **Rios, *Human Targets***, introduction and chapters 1-3
22. Culture and Punishment II
 - **Rios, *Human Targets***, chapter 4-6
23. MEDIA 1 TBD
24. MEDIA 2 TBD
25. MEDIA 3 TBD
26. MEDIA 4 TBD
27. MEDIA 5 TBD
28. Course Conclusion
 - **Morone, *The Devils We Know***, conclusion
 - **Smith, *Civic Ideals***, epilogue