

PLSC 35395. American Political Culture (Winter 2020)  
Thursdays 9:30-12:20, Foster 505  
Prof. Eric Oliver (Pick 518) Office hours, Tuesdays 1:30-3:30  
[eoliver@uchicago.edu](mailto:eoliver@uchicago.edu)

In this seminar we will explore the values, symbols, narratives, and myths that organize American politics. We will identify the largest elements that comprise America's various political cultures and investigate how they influence contemporary American politics. We will utilize a combination of historical source materials, classic studies, and recent empirical scholarship.

Students will be expected to complete all the readings and write short weekly papers. For the weekly papers, students will take a subject or topic from the assigned readings and identify a contemporary empirical study (from the past 15 years) that examines this topic. The paper should identify some element of the week's topic that organizes contemporary American politics.

Students will also be expected to present a final research paper of 15-20 pages on a subject of their choosing.

Books for the course (available at the Seminary Coop):

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*  
Hamilton, Jay, and Madison, *The Federalist Papers*  
Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*  
Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*  
Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*  
Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*  
George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*  
James Morone, *The Devils We Know*

Book chapters will be put on the course Canvas site. Journal articles should be accessed via the internet.

1. What is American political culture and how should we study it?

James Morone, *The Devils We Know*. Introduction, Chapter 1.

Samuel C. Patterson, "The Political Culture of the American States," *Journal of Politics*, (1968), 209

Erikson, Robert S., John P. McIver, and Gerald C. Wright. "State political culture and public opinion." *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 3 (1987): 797-813.

Wildavsky, Aaron. Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 1. (Mar., 1987), pp. 3-22.

Laitin, David D., and Aaron Wildavsky. "Political culture and political preferences." *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 589-597.

Street, John. "Political culture—from civic culture to mass culture." *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 1 (1994): 95-113.

Robert W. Jackman and Ross A. Miller, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science*, XL (1996), 633,

Wilson, "American Political Culture in Comparative Perspective," *Political Psychology*, XVIII (1997),

Wedeen, Lisa. "Conceptualizing culture: Possibilities for political science." *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (2002): 713-728.

Morone, Jim. Story Book Truths about America: Political Culture in Political Science," *Studies in American Political Development*, 19 [Fall, 2005] 2: 216-226

## Week 2. Religious Roots

Mayflower Compact

John Cotton, "An Exposition upon the 13th Chapter of the Revelations"

Cotton Mathers, "The Wonders of the Invisible World"

John Winthrop, "A City on the Hill," "A Model of Christian Charity"

Lyman Beecher, "A Plea for the West"

Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, Chapters 3-5.

Marsden, George. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.

### Week 3. Liberalism and Civic Virtue at the Founding

*Declaration of Independence* (1776)

*The United States Constitution*

Hamilton et al., *The Federalist Papers* (1787) 2, 5, 9-10, 14-17, 23, 39, 49, 51

George Washington, Farewell Address (1796)

Hofstadter, Richard. "The Founding Fathers," "Thomas Jefferson, the Aristocrat as Democrat"

Bailyn, Bernard, *The Origins of American Politics*, Chapter 1.

### Week 4. The Early Republic

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Vol 1: Part 1 — Chapter 3

Part 2 — Chapters 4, 5, 9

Vol. 2: Part 1 — Chapters 1-5

Part 2 — Chapters 1-9

Part 4 — Chapters 1-6

### Week 5. Slavery, Race and Ethnic Identity in the 19th and Early 20th Century

David Walker, *Appeal* (1830)

George Fitzhugh *Cannibals All!* (1857) - selections

Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at New Haven" (1860)

Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852)

Rogin, Michael, "Liberal Society and the Indian Question", "The Sword Becomes a Flashing Vision" from *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*.

King, Desmond S., and Rogers M. Smith. "Racial orders in American political development." *American political science review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 75-92.

Murakawa, Naomi. "The origins of the carceral crisis: Racial order as "law and order" in postwar American politics." In *Race and American political development*, pp. 245-266. Routledge, 2012.

#### Week 6. American Exceptionalism

Seymour Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*

Richard Hofstadter "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth"

Richard Hofstadter "Self-Help and Spiritual Technology" from *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, chapter 8

#### 7. The Liberal Consensus?

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*

Smith, Rogers M. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America" *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 549-566.

Morone, James. "The Struggle for American Culture" *PS:Political Science and Politics* 29 (1996): 424-430.

#### Week 8. Capitalism — supporters and critics

James Morone, *The Devils We Know*, Chapters 5-8

Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*

Chong, Dennis, Herbert McClosky, and John Zaller. "Patterns of support for democratic and capitalist values in the United States." *British Journal of Political Science* 13, no. 4 (1983): 401-440.

Week 9. Fearing and Resisting Authority

Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience

Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, Chapter 1.

Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism*, Chapters 1-2, 8

Week 10. Student presentations