

# Political Science 414

## American Political Thought

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160 Ferguson Social Science

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Office Hours: 8-9 a.m., Monday-Thursday  
And by appointment

### Course Description

This class is intended to introduce you to the fundamental ideas and thinkers of the American political tradition from the colonial era through the present.

### Course Objectives

1. The development of analytical and critical thinking skills through engagement with various texts and each other.
2. The improvement of oral communication skills through presentation and discussion.
3. Augmentation of writing skills with particular emphasis on coherence and clarity.
4. Develop an understanding of the key concepts and principles of the experiment in self-government with justice that constitutes the American regime.

### Required Textbook

ISBN: 978-0-393-92886-0

Kramnick, Isaac and Theodore J. Lowi, *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology*. W.W. Norton and Co.

In addition to the above textbook, you will need to be sure your MyLeo email account is appropriately configured to receive readings from your professor. Any readings sent to you as an attachment should be printed out and brought to class for discussion purposes.

### Course Requirements

First, every student will write a series of reaction papers to the assigned readings. These reaction papers should be 3 to 5 pages in length and ought to engage the material in a critical way. The purpose of these papers is to generate discussion and inquiry into the readings and provoke analytical thinking. Reaction papers are not merely summaries of the material read for class, but instead ought to examine the material for class in a meaningful way.

Second, every student will take two examinations in this course. There will be a midterm exam and a final examination. In addition there will be occasional opportunities for students to take brief quizzes over readings assigned for particular days.

Third, every student will be responsible for a 12 to 15 page term paper on a topic related to the course. This will be due at the end of the semester and ought to incorporate material from a variety of readings in a coherent argument advanced by the student.

Fourth, students will present their papers to the class and discuss their work with their classmates.

Finally, participation in this class is a key element of your education. You are expected to take part in class discussions and contribute your intellect and talents to your peers.

### Grades

Given the course requirements above, your grade will consist of the following elements (appropriate weights attached):

Participation	15%
Reaction Papers/Quizzes	15%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	20%
Final Paper	20%
Presentation	10%

The grading scale is as follow:

A	91-100
B	81-90
C	70-80
D	60-69
F	0-59

### Attendance

Attendance will be taken daily and you would be well-advised to attend every class. This is so for three reasons: First, material covered in class is beneficial to you and your education. Second, other students in class need your insight—there is a participation element to your grade that requires your presence. Third, material covered in class will appear on your exams and if you are not here you will not have it.

With that said, your professor is aware that sometimes stuff happens. You are allowed to have two absences to do whatever you want. The only exception applies to examinations and quizzes. You may not miss an examination or quiz because these cannot be “made-up.” If you do miss an examination or quiz you will receive a “0” for that assignment. Students with more than two absences will have 3 percentage points deducted from their final grade for each absence over two.

Of course attendance is more than merely being in your seat on time. You are expected to come to class prepared for class. Readings assigned for particular dates should be completed prior to coming to class. You should be prepared to discuss what you have read. To help motivate you, there will be readings quizzes from time to time that will constitute a part of your final grade in this course.

### Electronics Policy

We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers and tablets are wonderful things—but their use is forbidden in this class during our time together. Do not, under any circumstances, engage in “social networking” during class.

With regard to cellular telephones: one person in this class has permission to leave his on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for an hour and half without using your telephone. Your instructor reserves the right to answer any telephone that rings during class (and trust me—you do not want him to do it). Repeat violations will result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Texting during class is prohibited and will likewise result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in your being removed from the course.

### Conduct

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” What this means in terms of our class is that from time to time we will discuss controversial issues. During these discussions, you are expected to conduct yourself with civility and politeness (remember, politeness is the first form of politics). A university education is a privilege and should not be abused through disruptive and impolite behavior.

With this in mind, the following are not allowed in the context of this class:

- Sunglasses, Bluetooth earpieces, caps/hats, etc.
- Eating during class
- Texting, or any other form of instant messaging
- Listening to your iPod™ or other media devices

### Caveat

Your professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as required by the exigencies of the class.

### Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library, Room 132; Phone (903) 886-5150

### Course Calendar

(To be announced.)