Liberals and Conservatives in Recent American History, from Roosevelt to Trump

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Course Description and Themes
This course explores the interplay of modern American liberalism and conservatism, the two ideologies/political worldviews that have defined U.S. politics since the 1930s. It is impossible fully to understand one without also studying the other. Modern liberalism became a political force during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, while modern conservatism emerged as a viable movement during the early Cold War years and came of age during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Looking at political thought, grassroots activism, and electoral politics, the course will trace the evolution of both political perspectives, along with their frequent intersections, from the New Deal years up to the present. Students will engage recent scholarship along with numerous primary sources.

Required Books/Readings (Please purchase the correct edition!)
- Excerpts and articles posted on Blackboard course homepage in dated folders
Assignments (Written assignments can be uploaded via Blackboard.)

- Participation (20% of final grade)
  - Quality participation reflects engagement with the assigned readings. Raising important questions represents one valuable way of contributing to discussions. The participation component may include extemporaneous in-class assignments.

- Reading Reflections, 5 of 6 (15%)
  - This assignment will involve written reflections on weekly readings. I will supply response prompts. This assignment serves as a starting point for discussion—that is, a first draft interpretation of readings that we will “unpack” together in class. Responses should be around 600 words. Each student will be required to complete 5 of the 6 possible reflections.

- Midterm Take-Home Essay on Lyndon Johnson and American Liberalism, 10/9 (20%)
  - Students will engage the book in light of course themes.

- Reflection Essay on The Reagan Revolution, 11/9 (15%)
  - Was there a “Reagan Revolution”? This essay takes up that question.

- Research Paper Proposal, 11/20 (5%)
  - Details TBA.

- Research Paper, 12/16 (25%)
  - You will research and defend an argument about a topic related to a presidential administration and/or political trend since 1968. The range of possible topics is broad. I am happy to work with you to identify a topic of interest.

Grading Scale: A, 93-100; A-, 90-92; B+, 87-89; B, 83-86; B-, 80-82; C+, 77-79; C, 73-76; C-, 70-72; D, 60-69; F, 0-59

Class Structure and Expectations

- Classes will integrate discussions and short lectures, with a strong emphasis on discussion. Fruitful discussion requires close engagement of the readings, listed just below each class date. Reflection assignments will complement the in-class material and facilitate in-class discussion.
- Please clear foreseeable excused absences in advance. In the event of emergencies—e.g., illness—please check in with me as soon as possible.
- All assignments are due as listed. Under normal conditions, late submissions are granted only with advance clearance from the professor (and, in most cases, with a reduced grade).
Accommodations and Resources

- Washington University is committed to providing equal opportunity for students with disabilities. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) assists students with disabilities by providing services and arranging for reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access and equal academic opportunities. Students wishing to request services or accommodations must register and provide appropriate documentation to the DRC at cornerstone.wustl.edu. The DRC serves as a resource and advisor to students with disabilities and welcomes opportunities to consult with students, families, faculty, and staff. [Source: University College Online Teaching Manual]
- I encourage you to take advantage of the many resources offered by the Writing Center: https://writingcenter.wustl.edu/, 314-935-4981, writing@artsci.wustl.edu.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

- Students are bound by the University College policy on academic integrity in all aspects of this course. All students are responsible for following the rules outlined in the document regarding the university academic integrity policy: http://ucollege.wustl.edu/faculty/academic_integrity. [Source: University College Online Teaching Manual]

Course Schedule

8/28 Putting Labels in Historical Perspective
- Short in-class readings

9/4 Parties, Past and Present
- In-class case study: Nativism and American Politics
REFLECTION 1 (5 of 6 required)

9/11 FDR, Keynes, and Hayek
- Eric Alterman and Kevin Mattson, from The Cause (2012)
- F. A. Hayek, from The Road to Serfdom (1944; Reader’s Digest condensed version, 1945; Look magazine cartoon version, 1945)
REFLECTION 2

9/18 Anticommunism
- Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., from The Vital Center (1948)
- Whittaker Chambers, from Witness (1952)
- Robert Welch, from The Blue Book of the John Birch Society (1959)
REFLECTION 3
9/25 Liberal “Consensus” and Conservative “Fusion”
- Godfrey Hodgson, from America in Our Time (1976)
- William F. Buckley, Jr., National Review Mission Statement (1955)
- The Sharon Statement (1960)

REFLECTION 4

10/2 Rights, Civil and Otherwise
- Excerpts from Democratic and Republican Party Platforms (1960)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., articles in The Nation (1961, 1964)
- National Review, “Why the South Must Prevail” (1957)
- Barry Goldwater, from The Conscience of a Conservative (1960)

REFLECTION 5

10/9 The Saga of Sixties Liberalism

MIDTERM ESSAY

FALL BREAK

10/23 Law, Order, and the Silent Majority
[LIKELY MEETING WITH LIBRARIAN TO DISCUSS RESEARCH]
- The New York Times on George Wallace’s visit to Madison Square Garden (1968)
- George McGovern, Democratic National Convention acceptance speech (1972)

REFLECTION 6

10/30 The Pivotal Seventies, Part I
- Schulman, from The Seventies (2002)
  (Be thinking about your final papers!)

11/6 The Pivotal Seventies, Part II
- Alice O’Conner, “Financing the Counterrevolution” (2009)

11/13 Paper Consultations/Research Week
- You will each meet with me during the evening of the course (details TBA)
  PAPER PROPOSAL

11/20 A Reagan Revolution?
- Gil Troy, The Reagan Revolution
REFLECTION ESSAY

11/27 Neoconservatives, New Democrats, and W.
Read 1 of 2:
• David T. Courtwright, from No Right Turn (2010) OR
• Michael Kazin, “From Hubris to Despair: George W. Bush and the Conservative Movement” (2011)

12/4 Looking Back, Looking Forward
• Choice of readings about Obama and/or Trump (TBA) to facilitate discussion of the recent past
• Paper Consultations, Part II (details TBA)

12/11 Your Research
• Informal presentations on, and discussion of, research papers

RESEARCH PAPER DUE by 12/18, the last day of the semester