

Emory University
Department of Sociology
Fall Semester, 2018
MWF 10-10:50 p.m., Emerson 101

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Office Hours: M 2-3:00, W 11-noon

SOC 190 Freshman Seminar Sociology of Conservatism

Course description

What are the sources and varieties of contemporary American conservatism? How has conservatism evolved as a political philosophy and movement in the United States? How do conservatives address major public issues? And what kind of future does conservatism have in America? This seminar aims to answer such questions by discussing conservative texts, studying conservatives and their organizations, and debating conservative approaches to law and public policy. After reviewing some general conservative perspectives, the seminar will address a variety of issues, ranging from social policy and constitutional law to higher education and foreign affairs. The course has two main goals: to enhance your understanding of American conservatism, and to help you improve your writing and speaking skills.

Format

While some class sessions will feature brief lectures to provide background, most of this seminar will consist of collective discussion of texts and issues. We will examine several topics via informal or structured debate. Some sessions will involve brief presentations on assigned topics. Along the way, we will set aside some time for conversation about relevant political issues of the day, particularly the changing direction(s) of conservatism in the Trump era.

Readings

Readings (see schedule) will be linked or made available on Canvas or via Course Reserves.

Requirements

1. Preparation, active participation, and brief presentations, worth 20% of final grade.
2. Essay, 3-4 pages, worth 10% of final grade.
3. Debate preparation (including briefs) and participation, worth 20% of final grade.
4. Small-group project (12-page policy brief), including presentation, worth 30% of final grade.
5. Final exam, in short-answer/essay-format, take-home likely, worth 20% of final grade.

- You will get guidelines for most of the required tasks listed above.
- While the final exam will be cumulative, you will get guidance about issues to focus on.
- Some of your tasks will involve collaboration with fellow students in small groups.
- You will have several options for the final project, which will take the form of a policy brief (potential topics include issues not explicitly covered in the course materials).

Course etiquette

- Be sure to arrive on time. Repeated late arrival will result in a lower participation grade.
- Finish breakfast before class. No food, including gum, is allowed. Water or coffee is fine.
- Laptops are generally not allowed, except for specific tasks, as indicated by the instructor.
- This class encourages vigorous debate and expects active engagement.
- **Follow the Honor Code**, especially with regard to plagiarism. Please note:
The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, and to commit any form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the Honor Council.

Assistance

- The first semester in college can be challenging. If you have any difficulty with the work load in this class or with your overall schedule, feel free to talk to me.
- For assistance with writing, consult tutors in the Emory Writing Center or through the ESL program. For assistance with access or disability issues, contact adsrstudent@emory.edu.

Schedule

- This schedule is subject to minor changes, as needed.
- Book titles refer to excerpts only! (All readings are posted or linked on Canvas or Course Reserves.)
- For several classes, you will be asked to explore additional online materials.

1. Background: Varieties of conservatism

8/29 Introduction

Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives*

8/31 Conservatism as a form of social thought

Jerry Muller, "What Is Conservative Social and Political Thought?"

9/5 Conservatism as reaction against the French Revolution

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

9/7 Conservatism as defense of freedom

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*

9/10 Conservatism as defense of tradition(s) and community

Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*

Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*

Roger Scruton, "What It Means to Be Conservative"; "How to Be a Conservative"

- 9/12 Is Jordan Peterson (a) conservative?
Caitlin Flanagan, "Why the Left Is So Afraid of Jordan Peterson"
Glenn Ellmers, "The Jordan Peterson Phenomenon"
Assignment
- 9/14 Conservatism as a strand in American politics and public opinion
John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*
John Zumbunnen and Amy Gangl, "Conflict, Fusion, or Coexistence?"
2. The landscape of American conservatism [this will involve some exploration and research]
- 9/17 Conservative media: Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, The Wall Street Journal Op-Ed pages
Rush Limbaugh, Speech to CPAC 2009
Zev Chafets, "Late-Period Limbaugh"
Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*
Assignment
- 9/19 Conservative publications: National Review, The Weekly Standard, others
National Review mission statement
Assignment
- 9/21 Conservative blogs/websites: Power Line, Hot Air, others
Assignment
- 9/24 Black conservatives: Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Ward Connerly, others
Thomas Sowell, "Race and Cosmic Justice"; "A Conflict of Visions"
Assignment
- 9/26 White conservatives: Ben Shapiro, Charles Koch, Heather Mac Donald, others
Charles Koch, "Charles Koch Shares His Perspectives"; "Why Hate the Koch Brothers?"
Assignment
3. Conservatism and public policy
- 9/28 The administrative state
Joseph Postell, "From Administrative State to Constitutional Government"
Gary Lawson, "The Rise and Rise of the Administrative State"
- 10/1 The welfare state
Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*
William Voegeli, "Against Swedenization"
Nicholas Eberstadt, *A Nation of Takers*

10/3 Health care reform

Josh Blackman, *Unraveled: Obamacare, Religious Liberty, and Executive Power*
Avik Roy, *Transcending Obamacare*

Essay due

10/5-10 Debate preparation and formal debate: Immigration policy

Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We?*

10/12 Education reform

Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education"

edchoice.org; cato.org/research/school-choice

4. Conservatism and law

10/15 Originalism as a conservative judicial philosophy

Ilan Wurman, "The Case for Originalism"; *A Debt against the Living*
WSJ, "How Conservatives Won the Law"

10/17 Abortion law as a focus of social conservatism

Roe v. Wade, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*

Robert George, "Forty-Three Years after Roe, Hope Is Alive"

10/19 Conservatism in Supreme Court opinions 1

Antonin Scalia opinions

10/22 Conservatism in Supreme Court opinions 2

Clarence Thomas opinions

10/24 Conservatism in Supreme Court opinions 3

Roberts dissent in *Obergefell*; Alito opinion in *Janus v. AFSCME*

10/26-9 Debate preparation and formal debate: Religious liberty

Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission

5. Conservatism and/in higher education

10/31 The culture of higher education

William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*

Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*

- 11/2 Affirmative action and diversity
Fisher v. University of Texas
Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard
Richard Epstein, "Harvard, Affirmative Action, and Diversity"
Mark Bauerlein, "The Coming Implosion after Diversity's Victory"
- 11/5 Conservatives in higher education
Jon Shields and Joshua Dunn, *Passing on the Right*
Steven Hayward, "Why So Few Conservatives in Higher Ed?"
- 11/7 Conservatism at Emory
Assignment
Project proposal and outline due
- 11/9-12 Debate preparation and formal debate: Free speech as a conservative value
Keith Whittington, *Speak Freely: Why Universities Must Defend Free Speech*
6. Interlude
- 11/14 Project research: conservative think tanks
Assignment
- 11/16 Is Donald Trump a conservative president?
Charles Kesler, "Thinking about Trump"
Michael Anton, "The Flight 93 Election"
7. Conservatism and foreign policy
- 11/19 Conservatism as anticommunism
Whittaker Chambers, "The Direct Glance"
James Burnham, "Communism: The Struggle for the World"
Ronald Reagan, Berlin speech
- 11/26 Neoconservatism
Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion"
Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards"
George W. Bush, second inaugural address
- 11/28 Foreign policy conservatism
Bret Stephens, *America in Retreat*
Michael Anton, "America and the Liberal International Order"
Greg Ip, "We Are Not the World"

11/30 Foreign trade policy and conservatism
Peter Navarro, *Death by China*
Doug Irwin, "Trump and Trade"
Informal debate

8. Conclusion

12/3 The state and prospects of conservatism in America today
Discussion

12/5-7 Project presentations

12/10 Project presentations
Policy brief due

12/14 **Final exam**
3-5:50 p.m.