

THE AMERICAN FOUNDING

Course Description

American political institutions and culture are uniquely the product of ideas and self-conscious choice, and those ideas, in turn, are uniquely the product of experience. Even to the extent events and evolving values have changed our institutions and the ideas on which they are based, they remain deeply embedded in what might be called our political DNA. To understand who we are today, and what we may or may not aspire to be, it is necessary to understand the foundations of the American republic as well as the ideas that continue to animate our political institutions. Consequently, we will spend our time in this course examining the theoretical foundations of the Constitution, beginning with its roots in the early colonial settlements and continuing through the challenges to it that culminated in the Civil War.

Course Goals

Students will gain a thorough understanding of the theoretical foundations of the American republic. The student should be able to describe how American political institutions evolved from colonial foundations; identify the theoretical ideas that animated the struggle for independence; understand the debates surrounding the framing and ratification of the Constitution; discuss the theoretical bases of major features of the Constitution, including representation, federalism, separation of powers and the Bill of Rights; and, finally, demonstrate an understanding of how different understandings of the idea of union culminated in the Civil War.

Required Readings

Bruce Frohnen, *The American Republic: Primary Sources*

Willmoore Kendall and George W. Carey, *Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition*

George W. Carey and James McClellan, eds., *The Federalist*

Friedrich von Gentz, *The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution*

Ross Lence, *Union and Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun*

Course Requirements

Mid-Term Exam (<u>OCTOBER 20</u>)	25%
Final Exam	35%
Final Paper	30%
Class Participation	10%

The final paper will be a 10-12 page reflection applying a theme of the course to a contemporary political issue of the student's choice. Students must discuss the topic with me in advance. Participation consists of consistent attendance and thoughtful contributions to course discussions that reflect careful consideration of course readings.

Course Readings

A. Early America: Foundations (Weeks 1-3)

Frohnen: Mayflower Compact, Massachusetts Body of Liberties, Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America, Little Speech on Liberty, The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience.

Kendall and Carey: *Basic Symbols*.

B. Independence (Weeks 4-5)

Frohnen: Magna Charta, English Bill of Rights, Virginia Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, Thoughts on Government, Articles of Confederation.

Gentz: *Origin and Principles*.

C. The Constitution: Republicanism, Representation, Separation of Powers (Weeks 6-7)

Frohnen: The Virginia and New Jersey Plans, Constitution of the United States, Centinel 1, Brutus 1; *The Federalist* Nos. 1, 10, 14, 39, 47-51.

D. Federalism (Week 8)

The Federalist Nos. 41, 44-46. Frohnen: The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.

E. The Judiciary and the Bill of Rights (Weeks 9-10)

The Federalist Nos. 78, 84; Frohnen: Memorial and Remonstrance, Speech Introducing Proposed Constitutional Amendments; Brutus 14 (available at http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a3_2_2s2.html)

F. Tocqueville (Weeks 11-12)

Selections to be distributed.

G. The Meaning of Union (Weeks 13-14)

Calhoun, *Disquisition*. Lincoln, First Inaugural.