

***American Political Thought: Dissent in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century United States***  
**Politics 307, Spring 2008**

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MW: 2:30-4:00, SML 129  
Office Hours TF 1:30-3:00

**Course Description**

Some (mostly citizens of the United States, of course) have called the last 100 years, the “American Century.” The rise of the nation in global power over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is clear and dramatic. However, the title “American Century” can be perceived as conveying a cohesiveness that obscures the profound expressions of dissent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. Rather than simple consensus, this was a century of debate and division. From the Anarchists to the KKK, the Fundamentalists to the Feminists, the Labor Unionists to the Libertarians, the Militia Movements to the Yippies, this “American Century” was also marked by economic struggle, racial unrest, and “culture wars.”

In this course, we will be examining such expressions of dissent in 20<sup>th</sup> century American political thought. We will be focusing on three main areas of dissent and division: Capitalism, Labor and (anti-) Communism; Race and Racism; and Sex, Gender, and Sexuality. We will be addressing these inter-related areas of dissent from both the left and the right. We will also strive to remain cognizant of the normative beliefs and contexts from which these forces and texts are dissenting.

**Course Readings**

The following texts are **required** and can be purchased at the WU Bookstore:

The Best American Essays of the Century. Ed. Joyce Carol Oates. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

Many of the readings for this course are available on reserve at the Hatfield Library. In addition, I will be distributing some readings as attachments through the course e-mail list. Finally, I want to note that there will be additional readings assigned that are not yet on the syllabus; these readings will be announced in class.

**Course Requirements**

Above all, this course requires time, effort, and critical thinking. I expect to see evidence of your commitment, insight and creativity in your written work and in our discussions in class.

*Writing Assignments:*

There are three writing assignments in this course, each quite different in nature and scope.

1. The first writing assignment is an interpretive essay (8 pages) asking you to critically evaluate the answers Tocqueville, Mencken, and Walzer give to the question: “What does it mean to be an American?” This assignment will be due on February 4, 2008.

2. The semester will conclude with the composition and presentation of substantial research projects. Our reading throughout the semester will focus on themes of class, race and sex/gender, but of course expressions of dissent in American politics exceed these three themes (and moreover our treatment of these themes will not be comprehensive). For the major writing assignment in this course, each student will choose and examine an expression of

political dissent that is *outside* the scope of the reading assignments listed in the syllabus. One could, for example, conduct a research project on anti-war movements, PETA, the Free Speech movement, Operation Rescue, Earth Liberation Front, or the Minutemen. Each research project should seek to make connections with the style, mode of operation, organizational structure or other aspect of expressions of political dissent that we will be discussing throughout the semester. I want you to start thinking about your final projects now; I will be giving you a series of deadlines to meet for different steps of your research. The last five days of class will be dedicated to students' presentation of their research.

3. The third writing assignment will be the composition of short (1 page) response papers. These papers will be assessed as part of the class participation grade (see below).

#### *Class Participation:*

This is a seminar class not a lecture course. As you can see below, class participation represents a very significant portion of your final grade. The first element here, of course, is attendance. Attendance is mandatory; *unexcused absences from class will detrimentally affect your final grade*. All reading assignments should be completed prior to class and you should be prepared to discuss the day's assignment in a thoughtful and detailed manner. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

As I mention above, you will be responsible for writing a series of one-page reaction papers throughout the semester. I will be breaking you up into four groups. These groups will cycle throughout the semester. Each day the students in one group will be responsible for writing and distributing one-page papers reacting to the assigned texts. These papers should be informal (but by no means sloppy or careless). The aim of these papers is *not* to summarize the material, but to respond to the texts in a manner that will shape our collective analysis of these texts. **The papers are required to be posted on the Blackboard course platform by 9:00 PM the night before the given class meeting.** To be clear, these short essays are a vehicle for participating in class discussions and will be assessed as part of your class participation grade. Submitting thoughtful reaction papers, but rarely speaking in class is not sufficient for receiving high marks for class participation. Likewise, speaking often in class, but submitting careless reaction papers is also not sufficient for high marks for class participation.

\*\* Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day's lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

\*\*\*\* Of Special Note: I take plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism takes many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. "Plagiarism and cheating are offenses against the integrity of the courses in which they occur and against the college community as a whole. Plagiarism and cheating involve intellectual dishonesty, deception and fraud, which inhibit the honest exchange of ideas... Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for dismissal from the college." (Willamette University, *Plagiarism and Cheating Policy*.) Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment.

\*\*\* Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately, "fast" and "thorough" do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. *As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.*

*Statement Concerning Disabilities:*

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible and no later than the first week of the term.

**Grading**

Class Participation	== 25%
Essay On Being an American	== 25%
Final Project	== 50% (35% paper/15% presentation)
=====	
Total	== 100%

**Schedule of Events**

- This schedule is subject to change – especially with the addition of relevant readings.
- Many of the items below have links; if the links become broken, please let me know.
- **Items in bold will be available through the Reserves at the Hatfield library.**
- *Items in italics will be sent via email as word.doc attachments.*
- Items followed by (BAE) can be found in The Best American Essays of the Century.

***ON BEING AN AMERICAN: Conformity and Individualism***

- M 1/14: Introduction  
Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," 1852.  
<http://www.bartleby.com/142/82.html>
- W 1/16: Alexis de Tocqueville, excerpts from *Democracy in America*, 1848.  
Vol. 1, Ch. 15, "Unlimited Power Of The Majority In The United States, And Its Consequences." [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1\\_ch15.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1_ch15.htm)  
Vol. 2, Ch. 1, "Why Democratic Nations Show a more Ardent and Enduring Love of Equality than of Liberty."  
[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2\\_01.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_01.htm)  
Vol. 2, Ch. 2, "Of Individualism in Democratic Countries."  
[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETO/ch2\\_2.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETO/ch2_2.htm)
- M 1/21: **H.L. Mencken, "On Being an American," 1922.**  
Mark Twain, "Corn-Pone Opinions" 1901, (BAE).  
*Michael Walzer, "What Does it Mean to be an American?"*

***LABOR AND POWER, CAPITALISM AND (ANTI-) COMMUNISM***

- W 1/23: Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," 1889.  
<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1876-1900/reform/carnegie.htm>  
"Workingman's Prayer," 1894. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5007/>

- M 1/28: Eugene Debs, Speech at the founding convention of IWW,  
<<http://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1905/iwwfound.htm>>.  
Eugene Debs, Anti-war speech at Canton, OH, 1918:  
<<http://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1918/canton.htm>>  
Eugene Debs, Essay on Jesus, 1914:  
<<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/spusa/1914/0300-debs-jesus supreme.pdf>>  
IWW "Historical catechism" of American unionism:  
<<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1923/catechism.htm>>
- W 1/30: *Mother Jones, Speech to militant coal miners, Charleston, WV, Aug. 15, 1912.*  
*Mother Jones, The March of the Mill Children, 1925.*
- M 2/4: A. Mitchell Palmer, "The Case Against the 'Reds.'" 1920.  
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/hist409/palmer.html>  
Emma Goldman, "Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty."  
<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/patriotism.html>  
Emma Goldman, "Speech to the Jury."  
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/emmagoldmanjuryaddress.htm>  
**\*\*\*FIRST ESSAY DUE\*\*\***
- W 2/6: **Charles A. Beard, "The Myth of Rugged American Individualism."**  
***Harper's Magazine, December 1931.***  
Henry A. Wallace, "A Declaration of Interdependence." May 13, 1933.  
<http://newdeal.feri.org/wallace/haw05.htm>
- M 2/11: **Whittaker Chambers, "A Letter to My Children," from Witness, 1952.**  
**Program of the Communist Party (U.S.A.), 1954.**  
Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Declaration Of Conscience, June 1, 1950  
<http://gos.sbc.edu/s/chasesmith.html>  
**William F. Buckley, "On Dead-Red," 1962.**
- W 2/13: **Michael Walzer, "Town Meetings and Workers' Control," 1978.**  
Milton Friedman, "Economic Freedom, Human Freedom, Political Freedom,  
Nov. 1991. <http://www.sbe.csu Hayward.edu/~sbesc/frlect.html>  
**George Gilder, "Moral Sources of Capitalism," 1980.**
- RACE AND RACISM: "The problem of the 20th Century is problem of the color line."**
- M 2/18: W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Sons of Masters and Man," The Souls of Black Folk,  
1903. <http://www.bartleby.com/114/9.html>  
W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Coming of John," The Souls of Black Folk. 1903, (BAE).
- W 2/20: John Jay Chapman, "Coatesville," 1912, (BAE).  
Billie Holiday/Abel Meeropol, "Strange Fruit," 1939  
Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch"  
1937, (BAE).

- M 2/25: James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son," 1955, (BAE).  
**James Baldwin, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," The Fire Next Time, 1963.**  
 Langston Hughes, "Bop," 1949, (BAE).
- W 2/27: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," 1963, (BAE).
- M 3/3: Film: *Freedom on My Mind*.  
*Letters From Mississippi and other writings from Freedom Summer, 1964.*  
*Jinny Glass, Diary from Freedom Summer, 1964.*  
*Lawrence Guyot, An Oral History of Mississippi, 1964.*
- W 3/5: George C. Wallace, "The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham and Hoax," July 4, 1964. <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/19511975/integration/wallace.htm>  
 Ku Klux Klan, "**The Ideology of White Supremacy.**"  
 Knights Party Platform, <http://www.kkk.bz/program.htm>
- M 3/10: Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," 1964  
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxballotorbullet.htm>  
**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), "The Basis of Black Power," 1966.**  
 Black Panther Party, "Platform and Program" October 1966.  
<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111bppp.html>
- W 3/12: *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam/A Time to Break Silence," 1967.*  
 Elizabeth Hardwick, "The Apotheosis of Martin Luther King" 1968, (BAE).  
**Eldridge Cleaver, "Requiem for Nonviolence," 1968.**  
 Gerald Early, "Life with Daughters: Watching the Miss America Pageant," 1990, (BAE).

**SEX AND GENDER: Changing Roles, Changing Morality:**

- M 3/17: Rev. Billy Sunday, "Motherhood," Circa 1920.  
[http://www.biblebelievers.com/billy\\_sunday/sun17.html](http://www.biblebelievers.com/billy_sunday/sun17.html)  
 Rev. Billy Sunday, "Booze," Circa 1920.  
<http://billysunday.org/sermons/booze.php3>  
 Emma Goldman, "The Hypocrisy of Puritanism," 1910.  
<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/hypocrisy.html>
- W 3/19: **Readings TBA**  
 Film: *Rosie the Riveter*.
- M 3/24: *Spring Break*
- W 3/26: *Spring Break*

- M 3/31: "Wives and Lovers," Burt Bacharach/Frank Sinatra, 1963  
 National Organization for Women "Statement of Purpose" 1966.  
<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111now.html>  
**The Redstocking Manifesto, 1969.**  
**Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 1977.**  
 Maya Angelou, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," 1970, (BAE).
- W 4/2: **Audre Lorde, "The Masters Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," 1979.**  
**Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence, 1980.**  
**Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Identity: Skin Blood Heart," 1980.**
- M 4/7: **Paul Hill, "Defending the Defenseless," 2002.**  
 Phyllis Schlafly, "Understanding Feminists and Their Fantasies," Eagle Report, 12-2002. <http://www.eagleforum.org/psr/2002/dec02/psrdec02.shtml>  
**Katha Pollitt, "Feminism at the Millennium" Subject to Debate, 2000.**
- W 4/9: Presentations
- M 4/14: Presentations
- W 4/16: SSRD
- M 4/21: Presentations
- W 4/23: Presentations
- M 4/28: Presentations