Philosophy 221/Political Science 221
Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution

Fall 2024
Dewey 2-110D, TR 2:00-3:15

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Particularly in n an election year, we should think carefully about the meaning and justification of the American Republic. In this course, we will study the founding of the United States by examining the political theory which sparked the revolution itself and which lay behind the writing of the Constitution. We will look at some of the key works that were read by the Founders, particularly the works of John Locke, the Baron de Montesquieu, and David Hume. But we will also look at important works that from the period surrounding the revolution and the writing of the Constitution, like those by Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton, and we also look at writers that were sometimes ignored at the time, like those from Black authors and women.

The eighteenth century was a time of remarkable intellectual activity in the West, and the Americans played a central role in it, both reflecting the thought in Europe and influencing the course of thoughts and events there. Although it was over 200 years ago, the eighteenth century was a modern period: their concerns are largely our concerns. But since they come from a different background, they approach these concerns in a different and (I hope) illuminating way. So we want to examine these ideas in their context, but we also want to see what these thinkers can tell us about the role and nature of government and of society.

Texts

Joseph Addison, *Cato* (Liberty)*
David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Liberty)*
John Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration* (Hackett)
John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (Hackett)
Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense and Other Writings* (Modern Library)
David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (Penn State)
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (abridged) (Hackett)
David Wootton, ed. *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Hackett)
Readings on Blackboard

* The Liberty Classics editions indicated can be purchased, but they are also available free online, and I have created links to them on Blackboard. Most of the other texts can be found online in some form. However, I have a preference that we use the print text I have assigned, since they are cheap and having a common text will make references easier for everyone.

Recommended:

I recommend that you read a short general history of the revolutionary period as a background for our discussion of the Revolution and the debates about the Constitution. My favorite is Gordon Wood's *The American Revolution* (Modern Library, 2003) for that purpose, but any good general history will do. For a fun version, try Sarah Vowell, *Lafayette in the Somewhat United States* (Penguin, 2015).

Course requirements

Class participation is worth a significant portion of your grade. The class is based on student discussions, not on lectures. You are expected to come to class, and you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings – if only to ask relevant questions about them. Most of your class participation grade is based on regular, substantive participation in class discussions.

Tutorials. The first two major assignments for the class will be papers done using the tutorial method. I will give you a series of questions about particular texts, and I will ask you to respond to them in a paper of 6-8 pages. You and another student will meet with me in my office during the week set aside for that purpose. Together, the three of us will discuss each of your papers. While attending a tutorial is required, you will graded only on what is in your paper. I will explain the tutorial method in more detail later.

Final assignment. For the last assignment, you will have a choice: you may either write a third tutorial of 8-10 pages on a topic I will give you, or you may write an 8-10 page paper on a topic of your own choosing. This latter option will give you the opportunity to explore an issue of particular interest to you at greater length. Note that the paper must be a *philosophy* paper: it should explain and evaluate a line of argument that is important to the political philosophy in this period. It can *not* be a research paper on the people or the period, or even on the controversies of the day. I will be happy, however, to help you develop your topic. In any case, if you choose to write a paper, you *must* consult me.

The course grade is divided into 500 points, apportioned as follows:

First tutorial	120 points
Second tutorial	120 points
Final assignment	140 points
Participation	120 points

Students who get more than 505 points will get an A in the class (not A-, but A). A B requires more than 451 points; a C, more than 397 points.

Writing students: The students taking the course for writing credit have the same assignments as the other students with two exceptions. First, they will rewrite each of the first two tutorials, taking into account my comments and new insights they have about the issues. Each rewrite will be worth 100 points. In addition, they will write five reaction papers (see below), each worth 10 points, so they will be worth 50 points. The total possible points is, then, 750 points.

Reflection papers. Four times during the term, you will be expected to write a brief one-page reaction to the week's reading, due the day before the first date listed for the assignment at 9:00 p.m. These papers should respond to some specific arguments or position in the readings by

explaining why you agree or disagree with it. I will post the groups on Blackboard. Please keep track of when your reflection is due. Due dates for each group are listed on the schedule of readings.

Academic honesty: I will hold you to high standards of academic honesty. In your written works, you should always cite sources for any quotations and for any summaries of ideas that you present that are not your own. For a full statement of the university policy on academic honesty, please consult https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/. The Honor Pledge will be required on all tutorial assignments and papers. They are not needed on the weekly reflections, but the work there is expected to be your own.

Schedule of Readings

The schedule is (of course) tentative. References to *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* are abbreviated EFA. The number below the date indicates the group number whose reflection is due on the Monday of that week. Readings not in the required texts can be found on Blackboard (BB).

I. Introduction

Aug 27 — Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Democracy," in *OUY* (New York: One World, 2021), 7-36. (BB)
Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy* (BB)

II. Theoretical background to revolution

Aug 29-Sep 3 — John Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*

Sep 5-10 — Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*
Group B reflection due Sep 2, 9 pm

Sep 12-17 — Montesquieu, "Myth of the Troglodytes," and *Spirit of the Laws*, Books I-V, VIII-IX, XI, XIX, XXIV, XXV in *Selected Political Writings* (pp. 55-64, 109-94, 206-28, 230-42)
Groups A reflections due Sep 9, 9 pm

Sep 19-24-26 — David Hume, "Of the Liberty of the Press," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (BB) , 9-13, 604-05
"Of the First Principles of Government," 32-36
"Of the Origin of Government," 37-41
"Of the Independence of Parliament," 42-46
"Of Parties in General," 54-63
"Of the Parties in Great Britain," 64-72
"Of Refinement in the Arts," 268-80
"Of the Original Contract," 465-87

"Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," 512-29
Groups B reflection due Sep 18, 9 pm

III. The Revolution

Oct 1-3	• First tutorial (No regular class)
Oct 8-10	Edmund Burke, "Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies" (BB) Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* in Paine, *Common Sense and Other Writings*, 7-55 *The Declaration of Independence* (BB) Thomas Hutchinson, "Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia" (BB) Paine, *The American Crisis, Number 1*, in Paine, 83-90 *Groups A reflection due Oct 7, 9 pm*
Oct 15	*Fall break (No class)*
Oct 17	Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* 1785, Queries XIV, XVII-XVIII (BB) Jefferson, Letter to William Stephens Smith, 1787 (BB) Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1787 (BB) Danbury Baptist Association to Jefferson, 1801 (BB) Jefferson, Address to the Danbury Baptist Association, 1802 (BB) *Groups B reflection due Oct 16, 9 pm*

IV. The Constitution

Oct 22-24	Articles of Confederation (EFA 317-24) The Virginia Plan (EFA 324-26) United States Constitution (EFA 326-37) George Mason, *Objections to the Constitution* (EFA 1-3) Address of the Pennsylvania Minority (EFA 3-24) Speech of Patrick Henry (EFA 25-41) Speeches of Melancton Smith (EFA 42-58) "Cato," nos. 4-5 (EFA 58-65) "Centinel," no. 1 (EFA 65-74) "Brutus," nos. 6, 11, 12, 15 (EFA 74-96) *Groups A reflection due Oct 21, 9 pm*
Oct 29-31	*Federalist Papers* 1-2, 6-16, 23-24, 28, 31, 33, 35, 39 (EFA 140-231) *Groups B reflection due Oct 28, 9 pm*
Nov 5-7	• Second tutorial (No regular class)

Nov 12-14	*Federalist Papers* 47-52, 55, 57, 62-63, 70 (EFA 231-83) *Federalist Papers* 75 (BB) *Federalist Papers* 78, 83-85 (EFA 283-316) James Madison, "Speech Introducing Proposed Constitutional Amendments" and "Debate on First Amendment Language" (BB) Amendments sent to the states by the First Congress (BB) Bill of Rights (EFA 337-38) *Groups A reflection due Nov 11, 9 pm*
V. Other voices	
Nov 19-21	David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*
Nov 26-28	*Thanksgiving break*
Dec 3-5	• Third tutorial/Third assignment (No class)