

History 4485-01W

Liberalism and Conservatism in US Politics

Fall 2016

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams

Office Hours: TLC 3207

Mon., 10am-3:30pm

Wed., 10am-4:30pm

(Additional office hours available by appointment)

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Class Location:

Pafford 208

Tues. & Thurs., 2-3:15pm

Description:

This course will explore the evolution of liberalism and conservatism in American politics from the early twentieth century to the present day. The course will give you the necessary knowledge and historical context to understand the differences between liberal and conservative political ideas in the United States, and the historical reasons for those differences. This course will examine the various arguments that have been advanced in favor of both liberal and conservative policy proposals, and will critically evaluate those arguments using a historical perspective.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and class discussions. I encourage all students to participate by asking questions during lectures and making comments in discussion sessions. There will also be opportunities for short student presentations on designated days throughout the semester.

This is a Discipline Specific Writing (DSW) course, so writing assignments, including a research paper, will be a central component of this class.

Learning Outcomes:

This course has the following learning outcomes, which will be assessed through the various assignments in this course:

- To demonstrate content knowledge of the history of American politics from the early twentieth century to the present, with a particular focus on understanding the development of political liberalism and conservatism (assessed through exams)
- Analyze primary and secondary sources for their historical content and interpretations (assessed through class presentations, CourseDen posts, and research paper assignment)
- Demonstrate ability to research according to historical methods (assessed through research paper assignment)

- Demonstrate writing skills that reflect persuasive historical arguments based on evidence and proper citation (assessed through research paper assignment)
- To think historically (assessed through research paper, class presentations, and exams)

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	20%
Research paper	30%
Class presentations	15%
Class participation	15%
Final exam	20%

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students' written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95

A/A- = 94

A- = 92

A-/B+ = 90

B+ = 88

B+/B = 87

B = 85

B/B- = 84

B- = 82

B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range and D-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C. A grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade on an essay assignment, a student's essay must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has

mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of the assigned documents, and competence in writing. They rarely contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of the assigned documents, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm exam and a take-home final exam. The midterm exam will consist of essay questions and I.D. terms, and will emphasize broad themes presented in the lectures, discussions, and readings. One week before the exam, you will receive a study guide that will give you more information about the material covered on the test. I will give a make-up exam only in cases of a pre-arranged, excused absence for which documentation must be provided, or in cases of a legitimate health or family emergency that must be documented with a doctor's note, dean's note, or similar measure of proof. In all other cases, a make-up exam will not be an option.

The take-home final exam will consist of essay questions. I will give you the exam questions on Tuesday, November 29, and you will have until 11:59pm on Tuesday, December 6 to write 8-10 pages in response to the essay questions.

Research paper: The most important assignment of this course is an 8-12 page research paper. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

For all writing assignments, please consult the writing guidelines that the history department has posted on the College of Arts & Humanities' website for DSW courses (http://www.westga.edu/dsw/index_10083.php), as these guidelines will be used as a standard to evaluate work produced in this course.

Class presentations: You will be expected to give four class presentations during the course of this semester: a presentation on a particular New Deal policy (September 1), a presentation on a selection from *Courage in a Dangerous World* (September 8), a presentation on a selection from *The Reagan Presidency* (November 3), and a presentation examining an aspect of the election of 2016 from a historical perspective (November 8). Each of these presentations should be approximately five minutes long. For most of these presentations, you may partner with a classmate or present individually, although for your presentation on the Reagan presidency, I would strongly encourage you to partner with a teammate rather than give an individual presentation. For more information on the class presentation assignments, see the assignment guidelines.

Class participation: Your class participation grade will be based on your CourseDen discussion posts, your participation in class discussions, and the constructive feedback that you give to your classmates in response to the research paper drafts that you receive in early November.

As part of your class participation, you should write short summaries of four of the assigned books (*Courage in a Dangerous World*, Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative*, Critchlow and MacLean's *Debating the American Conservative Movement*, and Krugman's *The Conscience of a Liberal*) and post those summaries on CourseDen. Each book summary should consist of at least two paragraphs that briefly summarize the book, highlight an idea that you found particularly interesting or provocative, present an observation that will lead to further discussion, and suggest at least one intriguing question for the class to discuss. I will not assign these CourseDen posts a letter grade, nor will I evaluate them on the basis of grammar or structure, but I will instead treat them as I would comments that you make in class, and I will consider their content when I formulate class participation grades at the end of the semester.

After posting your summaries of the book, you should comment on the ideas presented in at least two other student posts. You should post your comments sometime before the class meeting in which we discuss the assigned book. Thus, for example, you should post your summary of Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative* (which we will discuss in class on September 22) no later than 11:59pm on September 21, and your responses to at least two other students' summaries of this book no later than 2pm on September 22. For more information on this assignment, please consult the guidelines for the book summaries that are posted on the course website.

Your class participation grade will also be based on your level of engagement in our class discussions – especially the discussions of assigned readings. Most classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. Habitual absences, as well as habitual silence in class throughout the semester, will negatively affect a student's class participation grade.

Plagiarism policy: Plagiarism, which is the presentation of someone else's words or ideas as your own, is a serious offense that will not be tolerated. It should go without saying that all papers that you write in this course must be your own work. Any students who are caught copying words or ideas from another student's work, a website, a textbook, or any other source, and presenting these words or ideas as their own work without proper attribution, will be charged with plagiarism. Students who have engaged in academic dishonesty will automatically fail this course and will be reported to the university administration for possible further disciplinary action. Please look at the course website to find guidelines on proper footnoting procedures, tips for avoiding inadvertent plagiarism, and a detailed explanation of what constitutes plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, please ask, because I will be happy to provide explanations. Ignorance is not an excuse for plagiarism; it is your responsibility to read the materials on plagiarism that are posted

on the course website and to take all necessary steps to avoid plagiarizing someone else's work.

The UWG history department's policy on plagiarism can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/~histgrad/academic_honesty.html. As this document states, "Any use of the ideas, information, or words of anyone else, including paraphrasing of the words and ideas, without crediting them is plagiarism and is a crime. A direct quote of the words (even only a few words) of someone else must be in quotation marks as well as have a note indicating its source."

More information about the university's honor code and the consequences for violating it can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly. The university administration has stipulated that all email communication between faculty and students should take place on UWG email accounts, so please use your UWG email account for all electronic communications that you send me.

To protect students' privacy rights, I will not return graded papers or exams to any third party (e.g., a student's friend or relative who asks to pick up a student's work on that person's behalf) unless a student gives me permission in writing (e.g., an email) to do so. There are occasions when I must disclose a student's grade to university administrators, other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair), or athletic coaches who need to know the academic status of students on their team, but in all other cases, I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of students' grades.

I would like to do whatever I can to help you succeed in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question about any subject pertaining to this class. I make it a priority to respond promptly to emails from students, and I am happy to talk with students during my office hours, so please feel free to stop by my office to introduce yourself and discuss any concerns that you may have about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

The following books are available at the UWG bookstore and through online book dealers, and are required for this course.

Allida M. Black, ed., *Courage in a Dangerous World: The Political Writings of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (any edition of this book is acceptable, but the one available at the UWG bookstore is the one published by Princeton University Press in 2007)

Donald T. Crichlow and Nancy MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009)

Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald Strober, *The Reagan Presidency: An Oral History of the Era* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998, 2015)

Paul Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007)

Class Schedule:

- 8/11 Liberalism and Conservatism: Historical Perspective and Contemporary Context
- 8/16 The Origins of Progressivism
- 8/18 Critiquing Progressivism
- 8/23 Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover
- 8/25 The New Deal: Political, Religious, and Social Origins
- 8/30 The Opponents of the New Deal
Research paper topic due
- 9/1 Evaluating the New Deal
Student presentations on the New Deal
- 9/6 Postwar Liberalism and Its International Context
Research paper source list due
- 9/8 Eleanor Roosevelt and Postwar Liberalism
**Student presentations on selections from *Courage in a Dangerous World*.
Read introduction (pp. 1-15), the section from *Courage in a Dangerous World*
pertaining to your presentation topic, and two other sections from the list of
assigned readings from this book.
(CourseDen post due at 11:59pm on 9/7)**
- 9/13 Truman's Fair Deal and Eisenhower's Centrist Politics
- 9/15 Civil Rights and Human Rights
- 9/20 The Anticommunist Right and the Anti-union Right
- 9/22 The Conservative Intellectuals of the Early Postwar Era
**Class discussion of Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*
(CourseDen discussion post due at 11:59pm on 9/21)**
- 9/27 What Type of Liberals Were John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson?
- 9/29 Civil Rights and the War on Poverty: A Policy History
- 10/4 The New Left and the Election of 1968
- 10/6 No class (fall break)

- 10/11 Debating the Conservative Movement of the 1960s
Class discussion of *Debating the American Conservative Movement*
(CourseDen discussion post due at 11:59pm on 10/10)
- 10/13 The Rights Consciousness of the 1970s
- 10/18 New Democrats and Moderate Republicans in the 1970s
- 10/20 **Midterm Exam**
- 10/25 The Christian Right, the New Right, and Neoconservatism
Research paper thesis statement due
Week of October 24: Meeting with instructor to discuss research paper
- 10/27 Groups Left Behind with the Party Realignment of the 1970s: Catholics, Libertarians, and Others
Topic due for November 8 presentation on the 2016 election
- 11/1 The Election of 1980 and the Policies of the Reagan Administration
First draft of research paper due
- 11/3 Ronald Reagan: A Discussion and Evaluation
Student presentations on selections from *The Reagan Presidency*
- 11/8 The Election of 2016 in Historical Perspective
Student presentations on the election of 2016
- 11/10 From Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton
- 11/15 George W. Bush and the Conservatism of the Early 21st Century
- 11/17 The Politics of Immigration, Economics, and National Security
- 11/22-11/24 No class (Thanksgiving Break)
- 11/29 Barack Obama and the Challenges of Contemporary Liberalism: A Discussion
Class discussion of Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal*
(CourseDen discussion post due at 11:59pm on 11/28)
- 12/1 The Future of Liberalism and Conservatism in American Politics
- 12/3 **Final version of research paper due at 11:59pm (submit via CourseDen)**
- 12/6 **Take-home final exam essays due at 11:59pm (submit via CourseDen)**