

History 5485

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)

Email: dkw@westga.edu

Phone: 678-839-6034

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.

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Demonstrate general knowledge of the history of liberal and conservative politics in the United States from the early twentieth century to the present (assessed through exam essays)
- Conduct original historical research (assessed through research paper)
- Formulate and defend a historical argument in standard English (assessed through research paper)

Assessment:

Students' final grade will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam essay	20%
Research paper	35%
Class participation	20%
Final exam essay	25%

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).

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 69.5, which converts to a C, 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, well researched, historically accurate, and tightly organized around a strong thesis. Research papers that receive a grade of A must also demonstrate a good understanding of the relevant scholarship on the topic. 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 relevant 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 relevant sources, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

Exams: Graduate students will take two take-home exams in this course. You will receive the midterm exam essay question on Thursday, October 13, and you will have until 11:59pm on Saturday, October 22 to submit an 8-10 page essay in response to that question.

The take-home final exam will also require you to respond to an essay question. I will give you the essay question on November 29, and you will have until 11:59pm on December 6 to write 8-10 pages in response. The midterm and final exams will test your ability to analyze the concepts covered in assigned readings, discussions, and lectures.

Research paper: The research paper is a major component of this course. The research paper may cover any topic of your choice pertaining to the history of American liberal or conservative politics from the early twentieth century to the present. If you are a graduate student pursuing an M.A. in history, your research paper should be approximately 15-18 pages long. If you are a graduate student pursuing an M.Ed., MAT, MBA, M.A. in a non-historical field, or any degree other than an M.A. in history, you may submit a research paper that is only 8-12 pages in length. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

Papers that are turned in after the assigned date will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are overdue.

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 participation: Classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. I will also expect you to attend weekly discussion sessions that I will hold for the graduate students. Most of your class participation grade will be based on your participation in these weekly meetings. At these sessions, we will discuss historiographical questions and the readings in greater depth, and will also discuss some of the graduate readings that do not appear on the undergraduate syllabus.

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 or other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair, students' advisors, or the graduate studies coordinator), 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 anytime that you want to discuss your concerns 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 required for this course, and can be ordered online or at the university library through GIL Express. Those marked with an asterisk are also available at the university bookstore on the shelf reserved for assigned readings for HIST 4485.

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

Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)

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

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

John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)

Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (New York: Free Press, 1991)

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

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**Graduate discussion: Articles and essays on the New Deal**

William E. Leuchtenburg, "The New Deal at the End of the Twentieth Century," in Milkis and Mileur, *The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism* (posted on CourseDen).

Frank B. Freidel, "The New Deal: Laying the Foundation for Modern America," in *The Roosevelt New Deal: A Program Assessment Fifty Years After*, ed. Wilbur J. Cohen, pp. 3-18 (posted on CourseDen).

Jerold S. Auerbach, "New Deal, Old Deal, or Raw Deal: Some Thoughts on New Left Historiography," *J. of Southern History*, 35 (1969): 18-30 (JSTOR).

Winifred D. Wandersee, "A New Deal for Women: Government Programs, 1933-1940," in *The Roosevelt New Deal* (posted on CourseDen).

9/1 Evaluating the New Deal

Undergraduate student presentations on the New Deal

9/6 Postwar Liberalism and Its International Context

Research paper source list due**Graduate discussion: Selections from *Courage in a Dangerous World***

Read the following sections of *Courage in a Dangerous World*:

1. The New Deal and the politics of the 1930s: pp. 17-39.
2. "The Moral Basis of Democracy": pp. 45-58.
3. Civil rights during World War II: pp. 113-114, 135-140.
4. The United Nations and universal human rights: pp. 149-162.
5. Foreign policy: The atomic bomb and the origins of the Cold War: pp. 115, 192-196, 206-208, 213-221.
6. The split among liberals over the Cold War: pp. 247-253.
7. "What Has Happened to the American Dream?": pp. 223-230.
8. Parochial school aid: 253-259.
9. "Social Responsibility for Individual Welfare": pp. 269-273.
10. Opposition to "right-to-work" laws: pp. 286-290.
11. The civil rights movement: pp. 300-309.

9/8 Eleanor Roosevelt and Postwar Liberalism

Undergraduate student presentations on selections from *Courage in a Dangerous World*.

- 9/13 Truman's Fair Deal and Eisenhower's Centrist Politics
Graduate discussion: Articles on the Election of 1948
 Harvard Sitkoff, "Harry Truman and the Election of 1948: The Coming of Age of Civil Rights in American Politics," *J. of Southern History*, 37 (1971): 597-616 (JSTOR).
 Robert A. Divine, "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," *J. of American History*, 59 (1972): 90-110 (JSTOR).
- 9/15 Civil Rights and Human Rights
- 9/20 The Anticommunist Right and the Anti-union Right
 No graduate discussion
- 9/22 The Conservative Intellectuals of the Early Postwar Era
Undergraduate / graduate class discussion of Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*
- 9/27 What Type of Liberals Were John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson?
Graduate discussion: The Grassroots Conservative Movement
 Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater's Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor," *J. of American History* 95 (2008): 678-709 (JSTOR).
 Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*
- 9/29 Civil Rights and the War on Poverty: A Policy History
- 10/4 The New Left and the Election of 1968
 No graduate discussion
- 10/6 No class (fall break)
- 10/11 Debating the Conservative Movement of the 1960s
Undergraduate / graduate class discussion of *Debating the American Conservative Movement*
- 10/13 The Rights Consciousness of the 1970s
- 10/18 New Democrats and Moderate Republicans in the 1970s
 No graduate discussion
- 10/20 No class (undergraduate midterm exam)
- 10/22 Graduate take-home midterm due at 11:59pm (submit via CourseDen)**

- 10/25 The Christian Right, the New Right, and Neoconservatism
Research paper thesis statement due
Graduate discussion: John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution*
- 10/27 Groups Left Behind with the Party Realignment of the 1970s: Catholics, Libertarians, and Others
- 11/1 The Election of 1980 and the Policies of the Reagan Administration
First draft of research paper due
Graduate discussion: Articles on the Reagan presidency
 Ted V. McAllister, "Reagan and the Transformation of American Conservatism," in *The Reagan Presidency*, ed. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham (posted on CourseDen)
 James T. Patterson, "Afterword: Legacies of the Reagan Years," in *The Reagan Presidency* (posted on CourseDen)
- 11/3 Ronald Reagan: A Discussion and Evaluation
 Undergraduate student presentations on selections from *The Reagan Presidency*
- 11/8 The Election of 2016 in Historical Perspective
 Undergraduate student presentations on the election of 2016
 No graduate discussion
- 11/10 From Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton
- 11/15 George W. Bush and the Conservatism of the Early 21st Century
Graduate discussion: Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*
- 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
Undergraduate / graduate class discussion of Paul Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal*
- 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)**