

Political Science 420: The Demise of Liberalism?
Spring 2006

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Office Hours: Thursday, 9-11 am or by appointment

Course Summary: This course addresses one of the most important questions in contemporary American (and worldwide) political debate: is post-war liberalism dead, to be replaced by free-market, small government, laissez faire conservatism? Since at least the beginning of the Eisenhower era, American commentators have predicted the end of liberalism. These voices reached their height during the Reagan administration, and while Clinton's presidency may seem to have indicated a resurgence of liberalism, in the eyes of many, the policies of Clinton only reinforced the political obituary and intellectual dead end of liberalism.

Have we truly witnessed the demise of liberalism? It is impossible to give this topic a sufficient treatment during a semester; instead, this course covers a few of the competing theories that purport to explain the demise of liberalism during the past quarter century. Our focus is, in social science parlance, on causes of the decline. However, it's important that we also understand what we mean by liberalism. Therefore, the course starts historically, with a review of the term "liberalism", "libertarianism", and "conservatism." Then we turn briefly to historical descriptions of the rise of liberalism during the New Deal, and one political scientist's relatively early identification of liberalism's demise. Next, we survey a number of political and social changes--structural and institutional conditions--that undergird the collapse. These include party polarization, civic engagement, and suburbanization. Finally, we assess the suspects: trust in government, the Cold War, and a return to American exceptionalism and conservatism. We close with a few contrarian statements and forecasts for the future.

This course relies on many books that have influenced recent public debates and which can be found on your local bookstore shelves. This is purposeful. While these books may lack the academic rigor we find in university press volumes and scholarly journals, they are widely read and discussed. Our job is to unpack the arguments in these texts and subject them to critical scrutiny, based on our years of academic training. That is why this course functions as a once a week seminar, and why it is limited to second semester juniors and seniors. While some of you may become academics, all of you, I hope, will be active political participants. I hope that the materials and arguments from this course will help you fulfill this important part of your duty as a citizen.

The following books are available for purchase at the Reed bookstore.

Brands, H.W. *The Strange Death of American Liberalism*
Dionne, E.J. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. The new or old edition is OK.
Fiorina, Morris. *Culture Wars?*

Franks, Thomas. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*.

Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. *Off Center*.

Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics*.

Lowi, Theodore. *The End of Liberalism*.

Mickelthwaite, John and Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation*.

The reading also includes selections from other books and articles. Most of these will be available either in printed reserve or outside my office using the "honor system." In all cases, where available, I have placed multiple copies of the books on reserve.

Class requirements:

- Three thought pieces (3-5 pages) with questions. 40% of course grade. **These are due on Monday at five pm the day before class. Please prepare ahead.**
- Final research paper (15-20 pages): 40% of course grade.
- Class attendance and participation 20% of course grade.

Course Schedule

1. January 24. What does "liberalism" mean? A historical review and a commentary on current times.

- a. Ross, Dorothy. "Liberalism" and Ryan, Alan. "Libertarianism". In Fox and Kloppenberg. *A Companion to American Thought*.
- b. Siegel, Fred. "Liberalism" in Foner and Garray, *The Readers Companion to American history*.
- c. Kloppenberg, James T. "Liberalism." *The Encyclopedia of American History*.
- d. Ellis, Richard J. and Robert E. Hawkinson. "Liberalism." In Cayton and Williams, *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*.
- e. Hoeveler, J. David. "Conservatism." In Cayton and Williams, *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*.
- f. Diulio, John J. 2006. "Are conservative republicans now America's permanent ruling class?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 52(20), January 20, 2006.
- g. Lukacs, John. 2004. "The Triumph and Collapse of Liberalism." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 51(16). Available at Academic Search Premier (at the library website).
- h. McGovern, George. 2002. "The Case for Liberalism: A Defense of the Future Against the Past." *Harpers Magazine*. December, 2002. Available at Academic Search Premier.
- i. "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality." Report of the American Political Science Association's Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. Available at <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/taskforcereport.pdf>

2. **January 31. Hartz, Dewey, and commentaries**
 - a. Dewey, John. *Liberalism and Social Action*. Chs. 1-2 (Reserve).
 - b. Hartz, Louis. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. Chs. 1, 8, and 9. (Reserve and photocopy)
 - c. Smith, Rogers. 1993. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz. The Multiple Traditions in America." *American Political Science Review*. 87(September): 549-66.
 - d. Kloppenberg, James. "From Hartz to de Tocqueville: Shifting the Focus from Liberalism to Democracy in America." In Jacobs, Novak, and Zelizer. *The Democratic Experiment*. Princeton University Press.
 - e. Hofstadter, Richard. "Franklin Roosevelt: The Patrician as Opportunist." Ch. XII in *The American Political Tradition*.

3. **February 7. Liberalism, the seminal political science statement**
 - a. Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*. Entire book.

4. **February 14. Liberalism and Conservatism from the 1960s to the 1980s**
 - a. E.J. Dionne. *Why American Hate Politics*. Entire book.
 - b. Thomas F. Powers. 2001. "The transformation of liberalism, 1964-2001." *Public Interest*. 2001 (Fall): 59-82. At Academic Search Premier.

5. **February 21. Christian, Corporate, and Neo-Conservatives.**
 - a. Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, Chs. 1-8.
 - b. Jerome Himmelstein. *To the Right*. Chs. 2-4.

6. **February 28: Causes 1: Geography. The suburbs, the West, and the South**
 - a. Oliver, J. Eric. *Democracy in Suburbia*. Chs. 1-4. (Photocopy and reserve)
 - b. McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Chs. 1-3. (Photocopy and reserve).
 - c. Lublin, David. *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change*. Chs. 1,2, 6, and 7.

7. **March 7: Causes 2: The End of the Cold War.**
 - a. EJ Brands. *The Strange Death of American Liberalism*. Entire book.

8. **March 21: Causes 3: The Emerging Politics of Values**
 - a. George Lakoff. *Moral Politics*. Entire book.

9. **March 28. Causes 4: Mistrust of Government**
 - a. Hardin, Russell. 2002. *Trust and Trustworthiness*. Russell Sage. Chs. 1, 7.
 - b. Uslaner, Eric. 2002. *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge. Chs. 1-2.

- c. Citrin, Jack and Samantha Luks. 2001. "Political Trust Revisited: Déjà vu All Over Again?" Ch. 1 in Hibbing, John R. and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. *What is it about government that Americans dislike?* Cambridge.
- d. Hetherington, Marc. 1998. "The Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 92(December): 791-808.
- e. Hibbing, John and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: Americans Beliefs about how Government Should Work*. Cambridge. Chs. 1-2, 5-6.

10. April 4: Contrarian Views: The Republicans are misleading the voters.

- a. Thomas Franks. *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Entire book.
- b. Larry M. Bartels. 2005. "What's the Matter with *What's the Matter with Kansas?*" Paper delivered at the 2005 meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- c. Jeffrey M. Stonecash (2005) "Scaring the Democrats: What's the Matter with Thomas Frank's Argument? *The Forum*: Vol. 3: No. 3, Article 4.

11. April 11: Contrarian Views 2: The myth (?) of party polarization

- a. Morris Fiorina. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*.
- b. Alan Abramowitz. 2005. "Is Polarization a Myth?" Paper presented at the Workshop on Political Behavior, Harvard University. Available here: <http://www.iq.harvard.edu/NewsEvents/Seminars-WShops/PPBW/abramowitz.pdf>
- c. Stephen Ansolabehere, Jonathan Rodden, and James Snyder Jr. 2005. "Purple America." Paper presented at the Workshop on Political Behavior, Harvard University. Available here: <http://www.iq.harvard.edu/NewsEvents/Seminars-WShops/PPBW/ansolabehere.pdf>

12. April 18. Contrarian Views 3: Diagnosing the modern Republican Party.

- a. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. *Off Center*. Entire book.
- b. Micklethwaite and Wooldridge. Chs. 9-14.

13. April 25. A possible solution. Changes and trends in civic engagement.

- a. Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Chs. 1-4, 12, 21, 23. (Photocopy and reserve)
- b. Putnam, Robert. *Better Together*. Chs. 12-13.