

POLSC 370B / HIST 352: The American Founding
Spring 2007
MWF 10-10:50
Instructor: Christopher C. Burkett

COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to better understand the American political constitution (understood in the classical sense as the sum of the component parts of which a whole thing is comprised) as it was during the Founding Era. Through an examination of writings and documents from that time, we will consider the foundational ideas – namely, Nature, History and Religion – that influenced and animated American political life during the Founding Era and into the early nineteenth century.

Contrary to the claims of some recent scholars, the American Founding did not simply represent an extension of British political and social customs. The American Founding was strongly influenced by a backward-looking appeal to political traditions (Classical Republicanism, for example) and a forward-looking religious identity (for example that America was the land of God’s chosen people). The American Founding, however, was unique among all previous foundings because it represented a conscious act of “reflection and choice,” to borrow a phrase from Hamilton, as Americans turned to a particular understanding of Nature as both the justification for their independence and the standard for justice in their political order. The American way of life – or the regime, as it used to be called – was understood to be compatible with political and moral laws derived from what was knowable about the nature of human life, and particularly of human nature. The turn toward Nature affected not only our political institutions, but nearly every aspect of what Jefferson called “the American mind,” including education, religious liberty, the family, and political equality.

This foundation on Nature provided Americans with a coherent framework for their political way of life; without a proper understanding of this framework, it is difficult to comprehend how Founding Era Americans could possibly justify what seem to be utter contradictions in the eyes of contemporary Americans. How, for example, could a regime founded on the idea of natural equality allow for the development of actual inequality? How could men and women be considered equal when they did not enjoy the same political privileges? How was it that not all men could vote in a political system that claimed to be based on the principle of consent? It is with an eye to answering these and other questions that we will engage in our pursuit to understand the nature of “the American mind” during the Founding Era.

CONTACTING THE PROFESSOR:

Office: Andrews 213

Office Phone: (419) 289-5686

Email: cburket1@ashland.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 9-9:45 am, 2-2:50 pm; Thursday 1:30-2:30 pm, and by appointment

Students are encouraged to meet with me outside of class to discuss any aspect of the materials or topics we cover in the course.

STUDENT RESOURCES:

Students are encouraged to visit the professor’s personal website at www.ashland.edu/~cburket1/. There are valuable links and resources for students posted at this website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Reading quizzes (approximately 20% of the final grade)

Reading quizzes over assigned materials may be given on occasion without prior notice.

2. Class preparation and participation (approximately 30% of the final grade):

This portion of the grade includes class preparation, quality participation, memory of assigned readings, and attendance. The preparation portion of the grade may also be influenced by the reading quiz grades. **STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO DO THE READINGS BEFORE CLASS.** Discussion is highly encouraged in this course. I will call on students from time to time to explain the main points in the assigned readings. I will also address questions to the class generally, to which students should volunteer answers. This part of the grade will be affected by excessive absences as well as by failure to speak up from time to time with correct answers, whether called on or not. The best way to prepare for class is to read the assignments and make a brief outline of the main points. Then memorize your outline.

3. Midterm exam (approximately 25% of the final grade):

The exam will consist of a short answer section and an essay section. In writing your exam essays, you should demonstrate that you have a good grasp of the topics we have covered in class or that are contained in the assigned readings. The exam essay should cover general themes to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge, but you should also include many specific examples from the readings to back up your claims. You should demonstrate that you have been participating intellectually in and out of class and thinking seriously about the topics we have discussed.

4. Paper (approximately 25% of the final grade):

Students will write a paper (approximately 9-12 pages) on a topic selected from a list provided by the professor. The paper must be typed and double spaced, stapled (no binders), Times New Roman 12-point font, with footnotes or endnotes for every citation. Notes should be in the Chicago format as indicated in Kate L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers*. Be sure to include a cover page with the title of your paper, your name, and the course number and title.

The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate that you have grasped the importance and complexity of the question or topic. You should be as concise and specific as possible in your papers, presenting a reasoned argument in support of or against a particular aspect of American political thought. Every paper should begin with a paragraph laying out your thesis, and in the body of the paper you should present evidence that supports your thesis. This is not an opportunity for you to simply give your own opinions on matters; rather, you should make observations and reasoned arguments and support them with evidence from the readings assigned for the course. You may also use outside sources, but the emphasis should be placed on the primary source documents assigned for class. Wikipedia is NOT a scholarly source, and you should avoid using this and other websites for your papers.

PAPERS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN HARD-COPY FORM. EMAILED PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

GENERAL POLICIES:

PLAGIARISM: Any willful plagiarism on papers or cheating on exams will result in an “F” for the course. You should read the Academic Integrity Policy in the student handbook or catalog. Also see the link on plagiarism at my website, www.ashland.edu/~cburket1/.

ATTENDANCE: You should make every effort to attend every class. Even if you think you have a good reason for missing a class, the professor retains the discretion to decide whether it will count as an excused or unexcused absence. More than 2 absences will result in an automatic 5% deduction per day from the participation portion of your final grade.

Contents of this syllabus are subject to change.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Hyneman, Charles S. and Donald S. Lutz, ed. *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760-1805*, 2 volumes (Liberty Fund, 1983, ISBN 0865970416 or 978-0865970410)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, sixth ed. (University of Chicago, 1996, ISBN 0226816273 or 978-0226816272)
- Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, fourth ed. (Longman, 2000, ISBN 020530902X or 978-0205309023)

OTHER REQUIRED READINGS:

- Other assigned readings will be included in a readings packet, which will be handed out in class.

READING PLAN:

WEEK 1 (January 17, 19): Introduction: Nature, History and Religion in the American Founding

W: No readings assigned

F: David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (APW II:719)

WEEK 2 (January 22, 24, 26): Foundings: Ancient and Modern

M: Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (cont'd)

W: Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (cont'd)

F: *The Federalist* Nos. 1, 2, 37, 38, 40 (packet)

WEEK 3 (January 29, 31, February 2): Historical Foundations: Classical, Republican and British

M: *The Federalist* (cont'd)

Theophilus Parsons, "The Essex Result," 1778 (APW I: read only second full paragraph on 484 to end of first full paragraph on 489; third full paragraph on 520 to 522)

John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," 1776 (APW I:401 to end of last full paragraph on 405)

W: Thomas Jefferson, Summary View, 1774 (packet)

Demophilus, "The Ancient Saxon or English Constitution, 1776 (APW I:340 to end of first paragraph on 354)

Jack Nips (John Leland), "The Yankee Spy," 1794 (APW II: read only 971 to end of first paragraph on 978)

F: *The Federalist* Nos. 9, 18, 19, 39, 63, and 70 (packet)

PAPER TOPICS ASSIGNED

WEEK 4 (February 5, 7, 9): The Foundational Appeal to Nature

- M:** John Bulkley, Preface to “Poetical Meditations,” 1726 (packet)
Richard Bland, *Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*, 1766 (APW I:67-76 only)
Town of Boston, Rights of the Colonists, 1772 (packet)
- W:** John Adams, Notes of Debates in *Letters of Delegates to Congress* (packet)
Declaration of Independence, 1776 (packet)
Massachusetts Constitution and Declaration of Rights, 1780 (packet)
- F:** *The Federalist* No. 10 (packet)
The Federalist No. 51 (packet)

WEEK 5 (February 12, 14, 16): Influence of Religion on the American Founding

- M:** Phillips Payson, “A Sermon,” 1778 (APW I: read second full paragraph on 534 to end of second paragraph on 536)
Edmund Burke, Speech on Conciliation, 1775 (packet)
Calvin Coolidge, Speech on the Declaration of Independence, 1926 (packet)
Abraham Williams, “Election Sermon,” 1762 (APW I: read only first full paragraph on 5 to end of first paragraph on 9)
- W:** John Tucker, “Election Sermon,” 1771 (APW I: read only 158 to end of first paragraph on 166)
- F:** Samuel West, “On the Right to Rebel against Governors,” 1776 (APW I: read only 410 to the end of last paragraph on 416)

WEEK 6 (February 19, 21, 23): Natural Rights, Privileges and Immunities

- M:** Founders’ Quotes on the Laws of Nature and Natural Rights (packet)
Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776 (packet)
- W:** James Madison, “Property,” 1792 (packet)
An Impartial Citizen, “Dissertation...Freedom of the Press,” 1801 (APW II: read only second full paragraph of 1132 to last paragraph on 1136; second full paragraph on 1147 to end of full paragraph on 1150; last full paragraph on 1151)
- F:** James Wilson, Penn. Ratifying Convention, 1787 (packet)
PA Supreme Court, *Respublica v. Oswald*, 1788 (packet)
PA Federal District Court, *U.S. v. Cooper*, 1800 (packet)
New York Supreme Court, *People v. Croswell*, 1804 (packet)
Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution*, 1833 (packet)

WEEK 7 (February 26, 28, March 2): Liberty, Equality, and Inequality

- M:** A Well-Wisher to Mankind (John Perkins), *Theory of Agency...*, 1771 (APW I: read only 138 to end of last paragraph on 140; 142 to end of first paragraph on 143; 148 to end of last paragraph on 149)
- W:** James Wilson, Lectures on Law, 1791 (packet)
Samuel Williams, *Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, 1794 (APW II: read only 954-55 on “Equality”)
- F:** Founders’ Quotes on Property Rights (packet)
James Madison, “Property,” 1792 (packet)
Nathaniel Chipman, “Of the Nature of Equality in Republics,” 1793 (packet)
Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, 1801 (packet)

WEEK 8 (March 5, 7, 9): Consent and Representation

- M:** Alexander Hamilton, “The Farmer Refuted,” 1775 (packet)
John Adams to John Sullivan, 26 May 1776 (packet)
- W:** Theophilus Parsons, “The Essex Result,” 1778 (APW I: read only 492-493; paragraph starting with “The following principles...” on 495 to end of first paragraph on 500)
- F:** Statements of three Massachusetts towns on voting rights (packet)
Thomas Jefferson to William Pendleton, 26 August 1776 (packet)

MIDTERM EXAM DUE FRIDAY 3/9

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS MARCH 12, 14, 16

WEEK 10 (March 19, 21, 23): Religion: Justifying and Preserving Liberty

- M:** Thomas Bradbury, "The Ass or the Serpent," 1774 (*APW I*: read only 240 to end of fourth full paragraph on 242; second full paragraph on 250 to end of sixth paragraph on 252)
Samuel West, "On the Right to Rebel against Governors," 1776 (*APW I*: read only first full paragraph on 422 to end of first paragraph on 428; last paragraph on 438 to end of first full paragraph on 441)
Anonymous, "Dialogue between the Devil and George III," 1782 (packet)
- W:** Justice Jacob Rush, "Nature and Importance of an Oath," 1796 (*APW II*:1014)
Samuel Kendal, "Religion the Only Sure Basis of Free Government, 1804 (*APW II*: read only first full paragraph on 1244 to last paragraph on 1247; first paragraph on 1249 to last paragraph on 1251; last paragraph on 1252 to end of first full paragraph on 1254; last paragraph on 1256 to end of first paragraph on 1257)
- F:** Anonymous, Untitled, 1764 (*APW I*:38)
Worcestriensis, "Number IV," 1776 (*APW I*:449)
Zabdiel Adams, "An Election Sermon," 1782 (*APW I*: read only 556 to end of first paragraph on 557)

WEEK 11 (March 26, 28, 30): Religious Liberty

- M:** George Washington to Hebrew Congregation at Newport, August 1790 (packet)
George Washington to United Baptist Churches in Virginia, 10 May 1789 (packet)
George Washington to General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches, May 1789 (packet)
George Washington to Roman Catholics, 15 March 1790 (packet)
George Washington to the Annual Meeting of Quakers, September 1789 (packet)
George Washington, Thanksgiving Proclamation, 3 October 1789 (packet)
George Washington, Farewell Address, 19 October 1796 (packet)
- W:** An Impartial Citizen, "Dissertation...Freedom of the Press," 1801 (*APW II*: read only second full paragraph on 1153 to end of first paragraph on 1157)
- F:** Thomas Jefferson to Danbury Baptist Association, 1 January 1802 (packet)
Thomas Jefferson to Rev. Samuel Miller, 23 January 1808 (packet)
Joseph Story, Commentaries on the Constitution, 1833 (packet)
State Constitutions (VA, NC, PA, NY, VT, SC, MA, NH)(packet)
U.S. Constitution, First Amendment, 1791 (packet)

WEEK 12 (April 2, 4): Religious Liberty

- M:** James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance,” 1785 (APW I:631)
Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty, 1786 (packet)
- W:** Joseph Lathrop, “The Reformer No. III,” 1786 (APW I:668)
Jack Nips (John Leland), “The Yankee Spy,” 1794 (APW II: read only third full paragraph on 978 to last full paragraph on 984)
Theophilus Parsons, *Barnes v. First Parish in Falmouth*, 1810 (packet)
- F:** **NO CLASS FRIDAY 4/6 – EASTER BREAK**

WEEK 13 (April 11, 13): Civic Virtue: Defense of Liberty, Respect for Rule of Law

- M:** **NO CLASS MONDAY 4/9 – EASTER BREAK**
- W:** Edmund Burke, Speech on Conciliation, 1775 (packet)
Simeon Howard, “Artillery Sermon,” 1773 (APW I: read only 185 to end of second full paragraph on 191; fifth full paragraph on 194 to last paragraph on 195; last paragraph on 201 to end of 202)
Continental Congress, *Appeal to the Inhabitants of Quebec*, 1774 (APW I:231)
- F:** George Washington, Farewell Address, 19 October 1796 (packet)
Nathanael Emmons, “Discourse on the National Fast,” 1799 (APW II:1023)

WEEK 14 (April 16, 18, 20): American Education and Character

- M:** John Adams to Mercy Warren, 8 January 1776 (packet)
John Adams, “Thoughts on Government,” 1776 (APW I: read only second to last paragraph on 407 to end of fourth full paragraph on 408)
Phillips Payson, “A Sermon,” 1778 (APW I: read only 523 to end of second full paragraph on 528)
- W:** Philo Publicus, Untitled, 1764 (APW I:42)
Benjamin Franklin, Information to . . . Remove to America, 1782 (packet)
Zabdiel Adams, “An Election Sermon,” 1782 (APW I: read only third full paragraph on 554 to end of first paragraph on 556)
Joseph Lathrop, “The Censor No. IV,” 1786 (APW I:663)
Joseph Lathrop, “The Reformer No. I,” 1786 (APW I:665)
Samuel Williams, *Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, 1794 (APW II: read only 953-54 and 955-57 on “Activity and Enterprize” and “Economy”)
- F:** Benjamin Rush, “A Plan for the Establishment . . . in a Republic,” 1786 (APW I: read only 680 to end of second full paragraph on 690)
Samuel Williams, *Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, 1794 (APW II: read only 951-952 on “Education”)

WEEK 15 (April 23, 25, 27): Women and the American Family

- M:** John Adams to James Sullivan, 26 May 1776 (packet)
Theophilus Parsons, "The Essex Result," 1778 (*APW I*: read only last paragraph on 496 to end of first paragraph on 497)
Richard Henry Lee to Hannah Corbin, 17 March 1778 (packet)
- W:** Founders' Quotes on Equality of the Sexes (packet)
Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776 (packet)
John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 April 1776 (packet)
Abigail Adams to John Adams, 7 May 1776 (packet)
- F:** Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (packet)

WEEK 16 (April 30, May 2, 4): Women and the American Family

- M:** Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (packet)
Samuel Williams, *Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, 1794 (*APW II*: read only 952-953 on "Early Marriages")
- W:** Benjamin Rush, "A Plan for the Establishment...in a Republic," 1786 (*APW I*: read only First full paragraph on 691)
Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes," 1790 (packet)
- F:** James Wilson, *Lectures on Law*, 1791 (packet)

LAST DAY OF CLASSES – FRIDAY 5/4