POS439z
T/Th: 11:45-1:05
Controversies in American Values
Prof S. Friedman
Fall 2012

Office Hours:
Contact Office, Humanities B-16 (basement); Thursdays, 10:30-11:30; 1:15-2:15
Downtown Campus, Milne #221; Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30. Also, by appointment.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are
endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life,
Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are
instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That
whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of
the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation
on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most
likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.” - Declaration of Independence IN
CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

Course Description

Call it the reverence for our American political tradition or call it political
indoctrination. Whatever you think of it, we have all been taught about concepts—
equality, liberty, justice, and the like. From an early age, we are taught about the
importance of founding symbols and documents, and how national rituals such as the
singing of our national anthem before sporting events serve as reminders of our national
heritage. We hear the words so many times we often don’t really hear them at all.
Alternatively, we hear what we want to hear. We simplify our understanding and don’t
consider that some of these key concepts in actuality mean different things to different
people and indeed have multiple meanings.

Thus, this course takes a look at some “values” that have played a key role as part of
American culture, examining alternative conceptualizations, current day debates and
above all, the ways these concepts are relevant for each of us as 21st century American
citizens. We begin with a brief look at where in the first place our values and beliefs
come from (political socialization), spend the majority of the course considering a variety
of American values and conclude with the application of these values to some current
controversial issues.

In addition, this course is a capstone course for political science majors. It will meet
this requirement in two ways. The course will ratchet up your understanding of some
often misunderstood ideas which have nonetheless been central to the workings of
American politics. Since this is a writing intensive course, a second (and perhaps fairly
intimidating) purpose of this course is to focus on your writing. You will be asked to
produce 4 short (approximately 3 page) papers and one longer (approximately 12 page)
paper. In recognition of the fact that many students find writing not such a happy
experience, we will engage in a variety of activities designed to facilitate learning and
make everyone more comfortable with the job at hand, e.g. affording opportunities for practice and engaging in discussions about specific strategies to make writing easier.

**Course Objectives**

To think through alternative meanings and conceptualizations about some values central to Americans since the time of the Founding.
To compare and contrast alternative understandings of these conceptualizations.
To apply these conceptualizations to current debates
To Locate yourself on a continua: What do you believe about these ideas and where do you stand on some of the relevant controversies?
To Incorporate other viewpoints into your thinking
To improve your research and writing skills to produce a high quality set of capstone papers

**Course Reading and Requirements**

There is no single text for this class. All material can be accessed on Blackboard, and as befits a 400 capstone class, you will find one or two required readings for each class.

**Short Papers, 30%:**
There will be 4 short (approx. 3-page) papers on various topics due throughout the semester (see table at end of syllabus for dates). These papers will ask you either to reflect and react to material we have discussed in class or ask for original research building on and deepening your understanding of class material.

**Research Paper, 25%:**
Approximately 12 pages long, this final research paper will be on a topic of your choice. In order to complete this assignment you will also be required to submit writing along the way: statement of topic, set of sources, preliminary draft (introduction section), and a more complete draft.

**Attendance, class participation, quizzes, 45%**
There will be two kinds of quizzes: every other Thursday there will be a 20-30 minute quiz on the readings from the last two weeks. Toward the end of the semester these quizzes will additionally include material from earlier parts of the class. There will also be approximately five pop quizzes throughout the semester. (Grading: reading quizzes, 30%; consistent participation, attendance, and pop quizzes 15%). (Expect more quizzes if you don’t read!)

**Attendance.** This course has a great deal of in class and collaborative work. You have to come to class. Each person is allowed one unexcused absence. Any other absence must be excused by the instructor before the absence or excused afterwards based on a medical note. Any unexcused absences after that will count against you.
Plagiarism: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me before submitting assignments for grading and/or reference the undergraduate bulletin at: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Plagiarism violations will result in disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities: If you need any class accommodations due to a disability, please utilize University resources as needed, and please let the professor know well in advance of any assignments requiring accommodation(s). It is a function of the University to provide such accommodations as needed.

Topics and Readings
(dates subject to change contingent on progress and interest)
All readings available on Blackboard.

8/28 Introduction
Edwin Feulner and Brian Tracy, The American Spirit: Celebrating the Virtues and Values That make Us Great (2012), ch. 1, patriotism (handed out in class and on Blackboard)

8/30–9/6: Political Socialization and the Agents that Shape It

8/30 Overview and Family Influences
Dawson, Prewitt and Dawson (1977), Political Socialization, ch. 3 (The Political Self), ch. 7 (The Family and Political Socialization)

9/4 Schools
Dawson, Prewitt and Dawson, ch. 8, Education, The Schools and Political Learning
Richard Niemi and Jane Junn (2005), Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn, ch. 2 (What High School Students Know about Civics), ch. 3 (How Students Learn about Government)

9/6 The Role of Culture and American Individualism
Robert Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (1985), preface, ch. 1, first part of 2 (to p. 35)

9/11–9/25 Equality

9/11 Theories: Equality of Opportunity, Outcome and Difference
Feulner and Tracy, ch. 17, capitalism

9/13 **Legal vs. Social Equality: The Case of Women’s Rights**
Nancy McGlen et al. (2005), Women, Politics and American Society, ch. 1 (The Struggle for Political Rights, pp 21-42)

CQ Researcher, Women in Sports

9/18 **No class (Jewish holidays)**

9/20 **Objective vs. Subjective Equality: Increasing Income Inequality**
CQ Researcher, income inequality
Quiz # 1

9/25 **Process vs. Outcome**
Deborah Stone. Policy Paradox (1997), ch. 2, equity,
CQ Researcher, Student Aid

9/27 - 10/18: **Rights, Liberties, Tolerance**

9/27 **Liberty**
Feulner and Tracy, Ch. 2, Freedom
Deborah Stone Policy Paradox, ch. 5 (Liberty)

*Class will choose one of the following three:*
NYT Debate: Can speech be limited for public workers? Sept.19, 2010
NYT Debate: Is it OK To Bash your boss on Facebook? Nov. 11, 2010
NYT Debate: Killing, with the law on your side?

10/2 **Freedom of Religion**
Feulner and Tracy, ch. 10, Faith
CQ Researcher: Freedom of Religion
NYT Debate: Age of Consent for Circumcision?

10/4 **More on Freedom**
Quiz # 2
Bring in an article about liberty

10/9 **Traditional Rights**
Feulner and Tracy, ch. 11, The Law
NYT Debate: Felons and guns
CQ Researcher: Voter Rights

10/11 **Human Rights**
Andrew Vincent, The Politics of Human Rights (2010), ch. 1 (skim)
CQ Researcher: Genocide
10/16 Animal Rights and Wrap up
   CQ Researcher: Animal rights
   Stone, Ch. 4 (Security)

10/18 Tolerance: From National to Local Controversies
   Feulner and tracy, ch. 12, Tolerance and Open Mindedness
   CQ Researcher: Shock Jocks
   Quiz # 3

10/23 Tolerance at the National Level

10/25 Tolerance at the Local Level
   NYT Debate: When free speech feels wrong, March 3, 11

10/30- 11/8 : Leadership (focus on the presidency)

10/30 What is leadership and What Makes a Successful Leader?
   Donald Phillips, The Founding Fathers on Leadership (1997); pick 2 chapters

11/1 Leaders in American Perspective
   Miroff, Icons of Democracy (2000), read 2 chapters of your choice)
   Quiz # 4

11/6 Public opinion, Representation and Leadership: The Case of the American Presidency
   Richard Ellis and Michael Nelson (2009). Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive, ch. 3. “Resolved, the president should be elected directly by the people” and ch. 6. “Resolved, the president is a more authentic representative of the American people than is Congress”

11/8 The Power of Democratic Leaders?
   Ellis and Nelson ch 1 “Resolved: The Framers of the Constitution Would Approve of the Modern Presidency” and ch. 8 “Resolved fighting terrorism requires relaxing checks on presidential power”

11/13- 11/20: Other American Values

11/13 Participation: Quantity, Quality or Equality?
   Stephen Macedo. Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation and What We can Do About It. Ch. 1
Also read 1 of:
Russell Dalton (date), The Good Citizen, ch. 1
Graham Smith. (2009) “Democratic innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation.” One of the following: chs. 2, 3, 4

11/15 Participation: At the Local Level
Macedo, Democracy at Risk, Ch. 3
Quiz # 5

11/20 Representation
Sally Friedman, Dilemmas of Representation, Ch. 5
Larry Bartels, Unequal Democracy, Ch. 9

11/22 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class

11/27- 12/6: Issues of Class Choice (TBD)

12/6 Quiz # 6

12/11 Wrap up

Short Paper Topics and Deadlines*

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<td>Topic 5: Tolerance</td>
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<td>Topic 6: Leadership</td>
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<td>Topic 7: The Issues/Other Values</td>
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*Please note that although you have choice of topics, you are required to hand in at least 2 of the three page papers BY 10/18

*Paper topics can only be submitted on the due dates outlined, they will not be accepted past this date.

Research Paper Deadlines:

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