“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 know the concepts—equality, liberty, justice, and the like. From an early age, we are taught 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.

Course Objectives

- To think through alternative meanings and conceptualizations of 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 continua: What do you believe about these ideas and where do you stand in contrast to others?
To improve your research and writing skills

**Course Reading and Requirements**

There is no single text for this class. All material can be accessed on Blackboard, and as befits a 300 level class, you will find one or two required readings for each class.

**Exams:**
Midterm 15% – 10/23
Final 20% – 12/13 3:30-5:30 pm as per the university schedule

**Short Papers: 35%:**
There will be 4 short (approx. 3-page) papers on various topics due throughout the semester. These papers will ask you either to reflect and react to material we have discussed in class or to conduct original research building on and deepening your understanding of class material.

**Attendance, class participation, quizzes:** 30% (20% Attendance/Participation; 10% Quizzes) In a relatively small class where discussion is so central to developing an understanding of controversial concepts, attendance is required. While one or two absences can be unexcused, you need to notify me of additional circumstances that would keep you from attending class. Additionally, there will be both announced and pop quizzes throughout the semester.

**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.**

8/26-8/30: Introduction

8/26-8/28 Edwin Feulner and Brian Tracy, The American Spirit: Celebrating the Virtues and Values That make Us Great (2012), Chapter 1, Patriotism
8/30 CQ Researcher, Student Aid

9/6-9/13: Political Socialization and the Agents that Shape It

9/4 Family Influences
Dawson, Prewitt and Dawson (1977), Political Socialization, ch. 3 (The Political Self), ch. 7 (The Family and Political Socialization)

9/9 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)

9/11 The Role of Culture and American Individualism
Herbert Hoover "Rugged Individualism" Campaign Speech (1928) and Charles Beard "The Myth of Rugged Individualism" (1931)

9/13 Socialization Wrap-up
9/20 Socialization Paper Due

9/16-9/27 Equality in Several Dimensions

9/16 Theories: Equality of Opportunity, Outcome and Difference
Feulner and Tracy, ch. 17, capitalism

9/18-9/20 Legal vs. Social Equality: The Case of Womens’ 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

9/23 Objective vs. Subjective Equality: Increasing Income Inequality
CQ Researcher, income inequality

9/25 Process vs. Outcome
Deborah Stone. Policy Paradox (1997), ch. 2, equity
9/27  Equality Wrap-Up
10/4  Equality Paper Due

9/30-10/18: Liberties and Rights

9/30  Liberty Introduction
       Deborah Stone Policy Paradox, ch. 5 (Liberty)
       Feulner and Tracy, Ch. 2 Freedom

10/2  Freedom of Religion
       CQ Researcher: Freedom of Religion
       Feulner and Tracy, ch. 10, Faith

10/4  TBA

10/7  Liberty and Obligation
       Rousseau’s Social Contract (Book 1 Secs. 6 and 7)

10/11 Liberty Paper Due

10/9  Rights: Traditional and Modern Approaches, introduction
       T.H. Marshall (title)

10/11  Traditional Rights
       CQ Researcher: Voter Rights

10/16  Human Rights
       CQ Researcher: Rape as a War Crime

10/18  animal rights
       CQ Researcher: Animal rights

10/21 Deborah Stone The Policy Paradox “Security” (skim)

10/23 Mid Term Exam
10/25 No class; Rights paper due

10/28-11/1: Tolerance

10/28  Tolerance: From National to Local Controversies
       Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Toleration
       Feulner and Tracy, ch. 12, Tolerance and Open Mindedness

10/30  Tolerance at the National Level
       CQ Researcher: Shock Jocks
11/1  Tolerance at the Local Level  
   CQ Researcher bi-lingual education

11/8  Tolerance Paper Due

11/4- 11/8: Justice (reading TBA)

11/15  Justice paper due

11/11-11/22 : Citizens and Leaders in the American Democracy

11/11-11/15: Citizens
11/11  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

11/13  Alternative Theories of Participation  
   Russell Dalton (date), The Good Citizen, ch. 1

11/15  Possibilities for Deliberation?  
   James Fishkin, “Consulting the Public Through Deliberative Polling?

11/18-11/22: Leaders
11/18  What is leadership and What Makes a Successful Leader?  
   Bruce Miroff, Icons of Democracy: American Leaders as Heroes, Aristocrats,  
   dissenters and Democrats (2000), ch. 1.  
   Donald Phillips, The Founding Fathers on Leadership (1997); pick 1 chapters

11/20  Leaders in American Perspective  
   Miroff, Icons of Democracy (2000), (read 2 chapters of your choice)

11/22  The Power of Democratic Leaders:  
   Ellis and Nelson ch 1 “Resolved: The Framers of the Constitution Would  
   Approve of the Modern Presidency”

11/25  No Class—expect assignment

12/2-12/4  Week of reflection (readings to be announced)
12/6  Citizens and Leaders Paper Due Wrap-up
12/9  No class
12/13  Final Exam
Short Paper Topics and Deadlines

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*Please note that although you have choice of topics, you are required to hand in at least 2 of the four page papers BY 10/25

*Paper topics can only be submitted on the due dates outlined, they will not be accepted past this date.
POS399, Assignment 1: political socialization

Due: Sept. 20
Please turn in via hard copy and e-mail to sfriedman2@albany.edu.
Give your paper a title reflecting your main idea/argument/most important thing you want to say.
Use at least four sources.
Approx: 3 pages
Cite sources throughout paper and include bibliography.
Have fun with it; it’s the first paper!

Write on one of the following three topics. See me if there’s a different direction you would like your paper to go. Note your job in the paper is to make an overall argument. In addition to describing “facts”, what is the overall argument or point you want to make? A title for your paper reflecting what you think your main idea is may be helpful here. Feel free to compare/contrast your work with class readings.

Socialization and subsequent political behavior
Using a notable political person (either from history or current times) as the basis for your paper, test out theories of how political socialization impacted the subsequent behavior of your person. Describe the early influences on your person—family, education, the larger culture/times the person grew up etc. Describe some of the ideas, activities, and particularly the values the person held/engaged in later in life. What are some of the connections between the two, how the person was socialized and his/her later behavior? What do you learn from your analysis? How influenced was your person by what happened early in his/her life and why are your findings important?

Unexplored aspects of political socialization
In class, we have been talking about political socialization and important agents of socialization. Our focus has been on family, schools and the larger culture, and we have talked in general terms about the socialization of the “average” individual. Go deeper with one relevant idea: in what ways do other socialization agents (peers, teachers, media etc.) shape our behaviors? How does the socialization process differ for specific subgroups of the population, e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, etc. Research what scholars have learned about one of these topics. Feel free to use class readings—Dawson, Niemi, Bellah—as comparisons. Compare/contrast with the discussions we have had in class. What is the most important idea you have learned from your analysis? What is your biggest takeaway?

The Values of Your Friends and Family.
We are beginning to discuss the kinds of values (patriotism, individualism, equal opportunity etc.) considered to be part of the so-called American creed. Interview a few of your friends or family members to ask them what values they think are important, why and where they learned these values. If you think it is helpful, ask them what they mean by the words they are using. What do you learn from your analysis? What is most interesting or surprising to you?