Course overview

America has been a liberal, democratic nation since its founding as reflected in its commitment to individual rights, private property, and democratic government. Or has it? Proponents of this view—of “American exceptionalism”—have been challenged by those who argue that American political development has been shaped not simply by a liberal tradition, but by illiberal strains that have excluded different societal groups from the polity on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Moreover, critics of American exceptionalism maintain that even though great advances have been made as African Americans, Native Americans, non-property holders, and women have been granted full citizenship, these changes have not occurred smoothly and were the result of political mobilization and often violent conflict. Furthermore, the recent rise in economic inequality, persistent poverty, and wage stagnation suggest that the “American dream” is increasingly out of reach. This course will use key episodes and themes of American political development to evaluate these competing accounts. We will also consider whether today’s political system lives up to the promise of the American Revolution.

Academic dishonesty

The University at Albany takes academic dishonesty extremely seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policies in this regard. I recommend you watch this video on plagiarism that will help you avoid it: http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1.

Often students leave themselves open to the charge of academic dishonesty because they fail to provide proper citations in their written work. Please be sure to always remember the following: if they are not your words, you must use quotation marks and citations; if it is not your idea, you must cite the source from which the idea came.
**Course requirements**

This class will consist of intensive discussion of the readings. Therefore, to get a good grade, it is essential that you participate meaningfully in class discussion. This means that you will come to class having read and thought carefully about the material assigned.

You will be assessed according to the quality of your participation in class and your performance in 5, 1500-word essays, which will address key issues that emerge from the readings.

**Attendance:** In order to do well in this class, regular attendance is crucial. If you miss more than 3 classes during the semester your participation grade will suffer as a result.

Your grade breakdown is as follows:
- Class participation: 25%
- Essays: 75% (15% each)

Essay questions will be distributed and answers due on the following dates:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Distributed</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 1:</td>
<td>Monday February 6</td>
<td>Friday February 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 2:</td>
<td>Monday February 27</td>
<td>Friday March 3</td>
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<td>Essay 3:</td>
<td>Monday April 17</td>
<td>Friday April 21</td>
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<td>Essay 4:</td>
<td>Monday May 1</td>
<td>Friday May 5</td>
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<td>Essay 5:</td>
<td>Monday May 8</td>
<td>Monday May 15</td>
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Students will be expected to meet all deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in cases of medical or personal emergency.

**Grading**

The grading scale will be as follows:


If you feel you have been awarded an unfair grade, you may contest it. However, if you want to do so, it must be done *in writing* and no sooner than 48 hours after you have received the grade. In your written complaint you need to provide a specific account of what in particular you are concerned about.

**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that may impair their ability to complete the assignments listed in this syllabus and/or who require special accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center. If you do require accommodations please let me know during the first two weeks.
Required Books (available in the bookstore, though may be found more affordably online):


Schedule & Readings:

**Week 1: Introduction to the course & Liberalism**

Monday Jan. 23: Introductions

Wednesday Jan. 25: The American democratic experiment


The Declaration of Independence, 1776, [https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript)

Friday Jan. 27: Tocqueville’s perspective

**Reading:** Tocqueville, Alexis de. “Origin of the Anglo-Americans” (1835). In Jillson and Robertson.

**PART ONE: THE SHIFTING TERRAIN OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP FROM THE FOUNDING TO THE PROGRESSIVE ERA**

**Week 2: Battles over American citizenship before and after the Revolution**

Monday Jan 30: A broad sweep


Wednesday Feb. 1: “Forging a Revolutionary People”
**Week 3: The Rise and fall of the “White Republic”**

Monday Feb 6:  “High Noon of the White Republic”

**Reading:** Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals*. Chapter 8.

Wednesday Feb 8:  “Dred Scott Unchained”

**Reading:** Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals*. Chapter 9.

Friday Feb 10:  No Class

**ESSAY 1 DUE**

**Week 4: Reconstruction interrupted and the resurgence of Ascriptivism**

Monday Feb. 13:  “The America that ‘Never Was’” (CLASS VIA SKYPE)

**Reading:** Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals*. Chapter 10.

Wednesday Feb 15:  No class

Friday Feb 17:  “The Gilded Age of American Ascrpitivism” (CLASS VIA SKYPE)

**Reading:** Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals*. Chapter 11.

**PART TWO: THE POLITICS OF SIN**

**Week 5: Hellfire Nation!**

Monday Feb. 20:  “A Nation with the Soul of a Church”


Wednesday Feb. 22:  “Us” and “Them”
**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapters 1&2

Friday Feb. 24: “The Puritans become America”

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapter 3.

### Week 6: The Abolitionist Crusade

Monday Feb. 27: “The Wrath of God in Black and White”

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapter 4.

Wed. March 1: Abolition and White Supremacy

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapters 5&6.

Friday March 3: The North

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapter 7.

**ESSAY 2 DUE**

### Week 7: The Victorian Quest for Virtue

Monday March 6: Purity and the Woman’s Sphere

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapter 8.

Wednesday March 8: White witches, modern witch-hunts, and Temperance

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapters 9 & 10

Friday March 10: Prohibition

**Reading:** Morone, James. *Hellfire Nation*. Chapter 11.

***************March 11-March 19: SPRING BREAK***************
PART THREE: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEW DEAL ORDER

**Week 8: The New Deal**

**Monday March 20:** FDR and the New Economic Order


**Wed. March 22:** Fear Itself?

**Reading:** Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself*, 2013. Excerpt from Jillson and Robertson.

**Friday March 24:** The Gendered Welfare State


**Week 9: The Politics of Steel & Race I**

**Monday March 27:** The Politics of Steel Fundamentalism


**Wednesday March 29:** Steel and Racial Change

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 2.

**Friday March 31:** The Civil Rights Act

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 3.

**Week 10: The Politics of Steel & Race II**

**Monday April 3:** Title VII

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 4.

**Wed. April 5:** Implementing the Kerner Commission Report

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 5.
Friday April 7: The Nixon Years

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 6.

**Week 11: Foreign and Domestic Policy**

Monday April 10: The Creation of Conflict

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 8.

Wednesday April 12: NO CLASS—PASSEOVER

Friday April 14: Industrial and Trade Policy under Carter

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 9

**Week 12: Industrial Policy and the Democrats**

Monday April 17: NO CLASS—EASTER

Wednesday April 19: The Decline of the Democrats

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 10

Friday April 21: NO CLASS

**ESSAY 3 DUE**

**Week 13: From liberalism to neoliberalism**

Monday April 24: The Reagan Reconstruction

**Reading:** Stein, Judith. *Running Steel, Running America*, Chapter 11 & Conclusion

**PART FOUR: RACE AND CLASS IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA**

Wednesday April 26: Neoliberalism

Friday April 28: The transformation of the American political economy


**Week 14: Mass incarceration—the new Jim Crow?**

Monday May 1: The rise of the “carceral state”


Wednesday May 3: The New Jim Crow reconsidered

**Reading:** Gottschalk, *Caught*, Chapter 6.

Friday May 5: Race and the carceral state.

**Reading:** Gottschalk, *Caught*, Chapter 7.

**ESSAY 4 DUE**

**Week 15: Race and Class in the Obama Era**

Monday May 8: Neoliberalism

**Reading:** Reed, Adolph. “Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism.” New Labor Forum 22(1) 2013, 49–57.

And


Wednesday May 10: Conclusions and reflections


**ESSAY 5 DUE MAY 15**