

CGCL 6400: AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

SUMMER 2025

Section 001: Online July 21-23 (Monday-Wednesday), and July 25 (Friday)
Time: 10:00am-1:00pm and 1:45-5:00pm (lunch break from 1:00pm-1:45pm)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course surveys the development of the American political regime by focusing on the major political ideas and institutions that have informed and structured the thought and practice of American politics over the course of American history. We will begin with the American Revolution that transformed thirteen British colonies into a large, extended, commercial republic. We will then examine the transformation of a constitutional republic managed by social, economic, and intellectual elites into a constitutional democracy featuring mass political parties during the antebellum period. Next, we will discuss how the Civil War and Reconstruction created a powerful national state. Finally, we will turn to the creation of an empire in the twentieth century. This course is designed to help you think, speak, and write clearly about the fundamental questions of American political development.

TEXTS

1. Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope* (Encounter Books, 2020)
2. Other readings in *The Founders' Constitution* (IFC) or posted on Canvas

GRADE

CLASS PARTICIPATION (30%)

Attendance at each class meeting is mandatory. This is a two-credit course, which means we will meet for 25 hours to discuss and write about the assigned course readings. You should spend at least as much time before the course starts doing the assigned course readings. This will allow you, once our week together begins, to quickly review the assigned readings each evening before the next day. 30% of your overall final grade will be based on your attendance at class meetings and how much you improve the meeting with your comments. You need to have your camera on during the entirety of each class meeting. To help you prepare for each class meeting, I will be sending out "preparation" questions before each class to guide you through the assigned readings.

CLASS PRESENTATION (30%)

At the beginning of each class session, I will randomly call on a student to summarize the assigned readings for that session for 3-5 minutes. 30% of your overall final grade will be based on the average of the grades you receive each time you are called on to present. To help you prepare for each class session, I will be sending out "preparation" questions before each class to guide you through the assigned readings.

COURSE EXAM (40%)

There will be a final exam to test your mastery of the course material. The final exam will include multiple choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Readings with an asterisk will be discussed, but you will have already studied them in a previous course

Monday 22 July: The American Republic

Aristotle, selections from *The Politics* (4)
Pierre Manent, "The Question of Political Forms" (9)
McClay, Chapters 1-5 (90)
Mayflower Compact, 1620*, TFC 610 (1)
"Slaves' Petition to Massachusetts Governor Thomas Gage," 1774, TFC 435 (1)
John Adams, *Thoughts on Government*, 1776, TFC 107-110 (4)
The United States Constitution*, 1787, TFC 29-35 (7)
The Federalist Papers 10 and 51*, TFC 128-131, 330-331 (6)

Tuesday 23 July: The American Democracy

Tocqueville, volume 1, book 1, chapters 2-5* (67)
Benjamin Franklin, "Petition from the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery," 1790 (1)
George Washington, "Farewell Address," 1796*, TFC 681-685 (5)
Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," 1801*, TFC 140-142 (3)
James Madison, "Veto Message on the Improvements Bill," 1817 (2)
McClay, chapters 6 and 9 (47)
John Taylor, "Tyranny Unmasked," 1822 (3)
Martin Van Buren, "Letter to Thomas Ritchie," 1827 (4)
Frank, "Presidential Elections, Party Establishments, and Demagogues," 2016 (3)

Wednesday 24 July: The American Nation-State

McClay, chapters 11-12 (54)
Alexander Stephens, "Cornerstone Address," 1861 (3)
Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," 1863* (1)
Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," 1865* (2)
13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, 1865-1870 (3)
Grover Cleveland, "Texas Seed Bill Veto Message," 1887 (1)

Thursday 25 July: The American Empire

McClay, chapters 13-14 and 16-17 (74)
William Graham Sumner, "The Conquest of the United States by Spain," 1899 (3)
Theodore Roosevelt, "The New Nationalism" 1910 (3)
Randolph S. Bourne, "The State," 1918 (3)
Herbert Hoover, "American Individualism," 1922 (3)
Calvin Coolidge, "Address at the Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Declaration," 1926
Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Second Bill of Rights Speech" 1944 (2)

Friday 26 July: The American Polity Today

McClay, chapters 20-22 (58)
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham City Jail," 1963 (5)
Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address," 1981 (7)
James Ceaser, "Demagoguery, Statesmanship, and the American Presidency," 2006 (43)