

Political Studies Program, Summer 2015
LEFT & RIGHT IN AMERICA
Instructors: Peter Berkowitz and James Ceaser
Washington, D.C.

We continue our study of American politics in the fourth week by taking a close look at the two great rival partisan interpretations of liberal democracy in America. We trace the development of the left from the rise of progressivism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the implementation of FDR's New Deal in the second third of the twentieth century, its expansion in LBJ's Great Society programs, and President Barack Obama's ambitious domestic agenda designed to further expand government's reach and responsibilities. To understand the right, we concentrate on the emergence in post-World War II America of several strands of conservative thought—libertarianism, social conservatism, and neoconservatism—and then consider these various strands as they receive expression in the speeches of President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush.

Tuesday, July 14, 2015, 1:15 pm to 4:15 pm

Introduction to Left and Right

Readings:

- René Descartes, Excerpt from *Discourse on Method*
- *Federalist* 49
- Selections from Thomas Jefferson
- Selections from Edmund Burke
- Port Huron Statement, 1962
- *Schutte v. Coal*, Sotomayor dissent, 2014

Discussion Questions:

1. Why might one want to build or reconstruct society on the basis of reason?
2. Why might one want to respect the organic growth of societies and the wisdom embodied in tradition?
3. In what ways does the Port Huron statement capture the spirit of liberalism? In what ways does it depart from it?
4. How does constitutional government reconcile the claims of reason and tradition?

Progressivism

Readings:

- John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed"
- Theodore Roosevelt, "Who is a Progressive?"
- Woodrow Wilson, "What is Progress?"

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Dewey's progressive education like liberal education? How is it different?
2. What according to Theodore Roosevelt are progressive aims and purposes?
3. How would a rationalist evaluate Woodrow Wilson's arguments about a living constitution? How would a traditionalist evaluate them?

Wednesday, July 15, 2015, 9:00 am to Noon

Progressivism 2

Readings:

- Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points," January 18, 1918
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Four Freedoms Speech
- Lyndon Johnson, Great Society Speech
- Michael Walzer, "Justice Here and Now," from *Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory*, pp. 68-80
- Barack Obama, Address before a Joint Session of Congress, February 24, 2009
- Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Economy in Osawatomie, Kansas, December 6, 2011

Discussion Questions:

1. What is liberal internationalism?
2. What are the four freedoms and what is government's task—at home and abroad—in securing them?
3. What limits on government, if any, does the "Great Society" presuppose?
4. What for Walzer are "the necessary features of distributive justice in the United States today"?
5. How does President Obama's program to transform health care, education, and energy policy promote a progressive politics?

Thursday, July 16, 2015, 9:00 am to Noon

Conservatism

Readings:

- F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Introduction, Chapters 1-3
- Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, Chapter 1
- William F. Buckley, "Statement of Intentions," and "Credenda and Statement of Principles," *National Review*

Discussion Questions:

1. What factors account for the rise of Post-World War II American conservatism?

2. How, according to Hayek, are economic liberty and political liberty connected?
3. What, according to Kirk, are the elements of social conservatism and how are they related?
4. In what ways does Buckley agree with Hayek? In what ways does he agree with Kirk?

Friday, July 17, 2015, 9:00 am to Noon

Conservatism 2

Readings:

- Irving Kristol, "What is a 'Neoconservative'?" and "The Neoconservative Persuasion"
- Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1981
- Ronald Reagan, Westminster Speech, June 8, 1982
- Ronald Reagan, Remarks, Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983
- George W. Bush, Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, November 6, 2003
- George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 2005

Discussion Questions:

1. What distinguishes neoconservatism from the forms of conservatism that preceded it and the left-liberalism its founders rejected?
2. Can President Reagan's commitment to limited government be reconciled with the importance he attached to moral questions?
3. Does George W. Bush's vision of America's role in the world reflect a development of, or a departure from, the conservative tradition in America?