The United States was founded as a republic, to be governed by a patriotic, virtuous citizenry. But in 1776 and 1787, citizenship was restricted and political equality was circumscribed. Slaves, women, native peoples, and some religious minorities were excluded from citizenship or denied basic political rights such as the right to vote. Despite the emphasis of the Declaration of Independence on fundamental, inalienable rights, the country’s founders rationalized the denial of rights to these groups. This course examines three examples of such denial of rights. First, we consider slavery and its legacy of racial segregation and violence—a fundamental flaw in the character of the new nation. We will read Frederick Douglass’ narrative of his life as a slave in order to get a renewed sense of the cruelty and deprivation slaves faced. We shall also consider the anti-slavery reflections of the Framers and what they proposed as a solution to the dilemma of slavery. We shall see how later political leaders such as Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson sought to mitigate the after-effects of slavery and end racial discrimination.

Second, the course considers the status of women in 1776 and the long struggle for political equality and the right to vote. In addition to the suffrage movement, we will review the struggle of Second Wave Feminists who in the last 50 years used legal cases to challenge sexual discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Third, we shall consider religious minorities who were persecuted in American society (despite First Amendment rights to religious freedom): Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews, Quakers, Catholics, Muslims and Mennonites. Analyzing these cases may help us better understand how difficult it is to achieve political and social equality in the United States and, ultimately, what it means to be an American in the 21st century.

Finally, the course examines 19th and 20th century American thinking about nationalism and territorial expansion—all in the name of exporting democracy and spreading Western values throughout the world. In debates about American foreign policy, some Americans championed imperial expansion while others attacked imperialism as an un-American assault on the principles of liberty and government by consent. The course ends with consideration of the role of the United States in global politics today.

Required Readings: Books available from Barnes & Noble Bookstore on Halsey Street.

A few short readings will be available online.
**Requirements:**

In-class Oral Report on the required Course Readings for one class.  *See below.*

Midterm Exam (take-home).

Attendance and Class Participation.

Book Review of a Biography of an important figure of the Founding/Revolutionary generation.

This will also be an oral report to the class, which is a seminar.  *See below.*

Term Paper (approx. 15 pages) and Oral Presentation on an important Supreme Court case on gender discrimination or church-state relations. Later in the semester, I will provide a list of cases from which you can choose.  The paper will be due near the end of the semester.

**In-Class Report on Course Readings for one seminar meeting.**

Each class member is responsible for an oral report on the required readings for one class session. This will involve distributing a one-page “brief” that will serve as the basis for class discussion; copies should be made for all class members. This brief should be written in complete sentences (thus not an elliptical outline) and should contain:

1. The key affirmations made by the author(s) under consideration.
2. The report should summarize the author’s argument and show how it relates to the particular course topic and required readings.
3. Compose three or four substantive questions about the readings or raised by the readings that the presenter thinks the class should discuss.

**Book Review of Biography of Historic Figure:**

Please select a biography of a revolutionary hero (or scoundrel?) from the list below, read the book, then write a book review providing major highlights of his life, including his position on slavery, on independence from Great Britain, and on his view of the 1787 Constitution (plus anything else you consider significant about his life and work---for example, Patrick Henry was known as an absolutely spell-binding orator whose rhetoric could make or break a legislative proposal before the Virginia House of Burgesses).


Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (you might also look at the script of L. Miranda’s musical, the libretto is available in most libraries).

David McCullough, *John Adams.*

Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington.*

Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin.*

Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House.*


Other biographical subjects from the Revolutionary Generation include: Aaron Burr, Patrick Henry.  Consider also Lynne Withey’s *Dearest Friend: A Life of Abigail Adams.*

Biography is due **February 25, 2020**---grades on any late papers will be lowered in fairness to those students who have met the deadline.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Tues. Jan. 21

Introduction and Course Overview
What is political theory? And how and why do we study it?
Are there any distinctive characteristics of American political thought?
Is there an American ideology? How has American political thought and practice been influenced by liberalism and republicanism? How define contested terms such as citizenship and equality?

Note: Because of the unusual occasion of impeachment proceedings currently underway, the following two readings are assigned for next week. Jill Lepore, “You’re Fired: The Origins of Impeachment,” *The New Yorker*, October 28, 2019, pp. 26-31. Online at [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)
Also: Gerald Pomper, “Peter Rodino,” in Ordinary Heroes and American Democracy (Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 31-57. Please read and be prepared to discuss at next class.

Jan. 28

The Colonial Experience and the Legacy of the Puritans
Film: “The Supreme Court’s Holy Battles” (PBS).

Feb. 4

The Revolution
The Political Theory of the American Revolution
What kind of revolution was this?
Declaration of Independence (Sinopoli, pp. 27-31, or any American Government textbook.
Ellis, Founding Brothers, Preface, “The Revolutionary Generation.”
The Loyalist critique of the break with Britain.

Feb. 11

The Constitution: Founding a New Nation
Articles of Confederation (available in Kramnick & Lowi, American Pol. Thought).
Constitution of the United States (1787), Sinopoli, Appendix, pp. 421-438.
Brutus & Cato, Anti-Federalist Critiques, Sinopoli, Part I.

Feb. 18

Slavery and the Slave Trade
Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave.
Film: “Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North.”

Feb.25

The Civil War
Abolition and the Failure of Political Solutions: Sinopoli, Part I, John Calhoun and Abraham Lincoln, pp.73-85; and Part IV, Benjamin Rush, H.D. Thoreau, George Fitzhugh, Abraham Lincoln, and Frederick Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln” (1876), pp. 241-277. Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address” and the “Gettysburg Address” are included (bonus points for anyone who can memorize and recite the approx. 200 words of the Gettysburg Address).
Film: Excerpts from Ken Burns documentary on “The Civil War.”
March 3  
**Reconstruction, Segregation, Desegregation, Civil Rights**  

March 10  
**Intolerance & Discrimination Against Religious Minorities**  
Film: “The Mormons” (excerpts). PBS documentary.

March 14-22  
Spring Recess

March 24  
**Rights of Religious Believers in the United States**  

March 31  
**Contemporary Church-State Cases and Concerns**  
Evangelical Christians voted in large numbers (80%) for Donald Trump and the Trump administration has provided evangelical leaders with easy access to the White House. Lines separating church and state are becoming increasingly murky. Some evangelicals are worried that such a close relationship between a political leader and their religious group will undermine their credibility in future elections. This class will review policy changes by the Trump administration in response to evangelical lobbying. Michael Gerson, article on Evangelicals & Pres. Trump, “The Last Temptation,” *The Atlantic*, April 2018. Available online at www.theatlantic.com. Also please see *Christianity Today*, editorial against Trump’s re-election, December, 2019. Available online.

April 7  
**Gender and Politics: Citizenship, Equality, and Difference**  
Women in the Early Republic.  
The Suffrage Movement and Political Equality. Why did it take so long? What is the state of women’s political participation today? Reading: Sinopoli, Part II, pp. 101 to 149. Authors include Abigail Adams, Judith Sargent Murray, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Emma Goldman.  
Film: Stanton and Anthony, “Not for Ourselves Alone.”

April 14  
**Gender, Law, and Public Policy**  
April 21  
Thomas, Because of Sex: One Law, Ten Cases, and Fifty Years That Changed American Women’s Lives at Work. Continue with Student Reports on legal cases.

April 28  
Last Class: Student Reports. Review & Summation of course.

Recommended Books:

S. Maisel and N. Dineen, Trumping Ethical Norms (Routledge, 2019).


Cass Sunstein, Impeachment: A Citizen’s Guide (The United States has held 18 impeachment trials in 230 years (including two presidents, Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton. President Trump’s trial will be the third trial of a president).

McCollum v. Board of Education of Champaign, Illinois, 333U.S. 203 (1948). In this case, Vashti McCollum objected to religious instruction in public schools and to the schools’ treatment of her son. After three years in state and federal courts, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in her favor, saying that religious instruction classes in public schools violated the Establishment Clause.