

Philosophy 221/Political Science 221
Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution

Fall 2015

LeChase 141, MW 10:25-11:40

Richard Dees, Ph.D.

Office: Lattimore 529

Hours: M 11:45-12:45, R 12:00-1:00 and by appointment

Phone: 275-8110

e-mail: richard.dees@rochester.edu

In this course, we will study the American Revolution by examining the political theory which sparked the revolution itself and which lay behind the writing of the Constitution. We will begin by looking at the important predecessors to the revolution, particularly the works of John Locke, the Baron de Montesquieu, and David Hume. We will then consider important works from the period surrounding the revolution, including works by Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. Finally, we will look at the debates surrounding the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, including the *Federalist Papers* and important anti-Federalist works.

The eighteenth century was a time of remarkable intellectual activity in the West, and the Americans played a central role in it, both reflecting the thought in Europe and influencing the course of thoughts and events there. Although it was over 200 years ago, the eighteenth century was a modern period: their concerns are largely our concerns. But since they come from a different background, they approach these concerns in a different and (I hope) illuminating way. So we want to examine these ideas in their context, but we also want to see what these thinkers can tell us about the role and nature of government and of society.

Texts

Joseph Addison, *Cato* (Liberty)*

Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Pacificus-Helvidius Debates of 1793-94* (Liberty)*

David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Liberty)*

John Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration* (Hackett)

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (Hackett)

Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)

Thomas Paine, *Political Writings* (Cambridge)

David Wooton, ed. *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Hackett)

* The Liberty Classics editions indicated can be purchased, but they are also available free online, and I have created links to them on Blackboard. Most of the other texts can be found online in some form. However, I have a preference that we use the print text I have assigned, since they are cheap and having a common text will make references easier for everyone.

Recommended:

I recommend that you read a short general history of the revolutionary period as a background for our discussion of the Revolution and the debates about the Constitution. I have ordered Gordon Wood's *The American Revolution* (Modern Library, 2003) for that purpose, but any good general history will do.

Course requirements

The following is a list of the assignments required to complete the course and their approximate due dates. The course grade is divided into 450 points, apportioned as shown:

First tutorial	Sep 28	100 points
Second tutorial	Nov 2	100 points
Final assignment	Dec 9	120 points
Reaction papers		30 points
Participation		100 points

Class participation, you will note, is a *significant* part of your grade. This class will be conducted as a seminar, and so participation is expected. Everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the readings—or at least, to ask questions about it.

In addition, several times during the term, I expect you to send me a one-page *reflections* on some aspect of that week's readings, due on the date indicated at 8:00 p.m. Turn them in by copying a text into journal entry under your group number and date on the Reflections page on the Blackboard site. These papers should respond to some specific arguments or position in the readings by explaining why you agree or disagree with it. For these reaction papers, the class is divided into three groups, determined by the first letter of your last name:

- Group 1 PHL students
- Group 2 PSC students
- Group 3 Writing students

Please keep track of when your reflection is due. Due dates for each group are listed on the schedule of readings.

The major assignments in this course will be done using a tutorial system. I will give you a series of questions about particular texts, and I will ask you to respond to them in a paper of 6-8 pages. You and another student will meet with me in my office during the week set aside for that purpose. Together, the three of us will discuss each of your papers. While attending a tutorial is required, you will be graded only on what is in your paper. I will explain the tutorial method in more detail later.

For your final assignment, you will have a choice: you may either write a third tutorial of 8-10 pages on a topic I will give you, or you may write an 8-10 page paper on a topic of your own choosing. This latter option will give you the opportunity to explore an issue of particular interest to you at greater length. Note that the paper must be a *philosophy* paper: it should explain and evaluate a line of argument that is important to the political philosophy in this period. It can *not* be a research paper on the people or the period, or even on the controversies of the day. I will be happy, however, to help you develop your topic. In any case, if you choose to write a paper, you *must* consult me.

Writing students: The students taking the course for writing credit have the same assignments as the other students with two exceptions. First, they will rewrite each of the first two tutorials, taking into account my comments and new insights they have about the issues. Each rewrite will be worth 100 points. In addition, they will write four reaction papers rather than just three, so they will be worth 40 points. The total possible points is, then, 660 points.

Academic honesty: I will hold you to high standards of academic honesty. In your written works, you should always cite sources for any quotations and for any summaries of ideas that you present that are not your own. For a full statement of the university policy on academic honesty, please consult <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>. The Honor Pledge will be required on all tutorial assignments and reflection papers.

Schedule of Readings

The schedule is (of course) tentative. References to *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* are abbreviated EFA. The number below the date indicates the group number whose reflection is due on the Monday of that week. Readings not in the required texts can be found on Blackboard (BB).

I. Theoretical background to revolution

Aug 31	Introduction Joseph Addison, <i>Cato: A Tragedy</i> (BB)
Sep 2	John Locke, <i>Letter concerning Toleration</i>
Sep 7-9	<i>Labor Day (No class, Sep 7)</i> Group 3 reflections due Sep 8 Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i> , chs. I-V
Sep 14-16	Group 1 reflections due Sep 13 Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chs. X-XIX
Sep 21-23	Group 2 reflections due Sep 20 Montesquieu, "Myth of the Troglodytes," and <i>Spirit of the Laws</i> , Books I-V, VIII-IX, XI, XIX, XXIV, XXV in <i>Selected Political Writings</i> (pp. 55-64, 109-94, 206-28, 230-42)
Sep 28-30	• First tutorial (No regular class)
Oct 5-7	<i>Fall break (No class, Oct 5)</i> Group 3 reflections due Oct 4 David Hume, "Of the Liberty of the Press," in <i>Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary</i> (BB), 9-13, 604-05 "Of the First Principles of Government," 32-36

- “Of the Origin of Government,” 37-41
 - “Of the Independence of Parliament,” 42-46
 - “Of Parties in General,” 54-63
 - “Of the Parties in Great Britain,” 64-72
- Oct 12 Hume, “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,” 111-37
 “Of the Original Contract,” 465-87
 “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,” 512-29

II. The Revolution

- Oct 14 *Group 1 reflections due Oct 13*
 Edmund Burke, “Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies” (BB)
 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Political Writings*, 1-38
- Oct 19-21 *Group 2 reflections due Oct 18*
The Declaration of Independence (BB)
 Thomas Hutchinson, “Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia” (BB)
 Thomas Jefferson, “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom,” 1777 (BB)
 Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785, Queries XIV, XVII-XVIII (BB)
 Jefferson, Letter to William Stephens Smith, 1787 (BB)
 Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1787 (BB)
 Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, 1787 (BB)
 Danbury Baptist Association to Jefferson, 1801 (BB)
 Jefferson, Address to the Danbury Baptist Association, 1802 (BB)
 Jefferson, “Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with those of Others” (1803) (BB)

III. The Constitution

- Oct 26-28 *Group 3 reflections due Oct 25*
 Articles of Confederation (EFA 317-24)
 The Virginia Plan (EFA 324-26)
 United States Constitution (EFA 326-37)
 George Mason, *Objections to the Constitution* (EFA 1-3)
 Address of the Pennsylvania Minority (EFA 3-24)
 Speech of Patrick Henry (EFA 25-41)
 Speeches of Melancton Smith (EFA 42-58)
 “Cato,” nos. 4-5 (EFA 58-65)
 “Centinel,” no. 1 (EFA 65-74)
 “Brutus,” nos. 6, 11, 12, 15 (EFA 74-96)

- Nov 2-4 • Second tutorial (No regular classes)
- Nov 9-11 *Group 1 reflections due Nov 8*
Federalist Papers 1-2, 6-16, 23-24, 28, 31, 33, 35, 39, (EFA 140-231)
- Nov 16-18 *Group 2 reflections due Nov 15*
Federalist Papers 47-52, 55, 57, 62-63, 70, 78, 83-85 (EFA 231-316)

IV. After the Constitution

- Nov 23-25 James Madison, “Speech Introducing Proposed Constitutional Amendments” and “Debate on First Amendment Language” (BB)
 Amendments sent to the states by the First Congress (BB)
 Bill of Rights (EFA 337-38)
Thanksgiving break (No class, Nov 25)
- Nov 30-Dec 2 *Group 3 reflections due Nov 29*
 Paine, *Rights of Man*, part II in *Political Writings*, 147-203
 Alexander Hamilton, *Pacificus* I-VII (BB)
- Dec 7-9 Jefferson to Madison, 1793 (BB)
 Madison, *Helvidius* I-V (BB)
 Hamilton, *Americanus*, I-II (BB)
 Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1789 and Madison, Letter to Thomas Jefferson, 1790 (BB)
 • Third tutorial/Third assignment (No class, Dec 9)