AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL THOUGHT  
American University  
School of Public Affairs  
Department of Government

GOVT-326-001  
Mondays 17:30-20:00  
WARD 204  
Mondays 17:00-17:30; 20:00-20:30 (WARD 307)

Professor David Azerrad  
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This course traces the development of American conservative political thought in the past century with a view to understanding the major strands that comprise American conservatism: constitutional conservatism, traditional conservatism, libertarianism & classical liberalism, neoconservatism, social conservatism, and paleoconservatism. In the course of doing so, the course will introduce students to the writings of leading conservative thinkers and examine the major fault lines in the American conservative movement.

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and explain the major intellectual strands that comprise American conservatism.
2. Compare and contrast the philosophical foundations of each of the major strands of conservative thought.
3. Understand the major fault lines in the American conservative movement.

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this class. All the readings will be distributed at least one week prior to class and also posted on Blackboard. Students who have to miss a class can pick up a copy of the readings in my box in my office.

I strongly recommend you not bring a computer to class and work off of the printed readings. Studies show that taking notes by hand helps you retain information much more effectively than simply transcribing classroom discussion on your laptop.

Course Grading

- Attendance, Participation, and Weekly Quizzes (10%)
- Midterm (25%)
- Essay (25%)
- Final Exam (40%)

The grade ranges are defined as follows:

A= unusual excellence (A- 90-92; A 93-100)
B= work distinctly above average (B- 80-82; B 83-86, B+ 87-89)
C= work of average quality (C- 70-72; C 73-76; C+ 77-79)
D= below average work, the lowest passing mark (D 60-69)
F= Failure, no course Credit (59 and below)

Attendance, Participation, and Reading Quizzes

Please turn off your cell phone before coming to class (i.e. don’t just silence them).

I will take roll call each class promptly before we begin. Please be on time. If you are late 3 times, that will count as an absence.

The course will include quizzes based on the week’s reading. These will take about 5 minutes and be administered promptly at the beginning of class. If you do the readings carefully, you will have no trouble with these (for how to read carefully, see the hand-out “How to Read”). **Expect one every week.**

Absence Policy

Attendance is crucial. This is a small class which benefits from the contributions of all students and much of the learning will derive from our discussion. If you need to miss a class, please notify me ahead of time. Repeated absences will affect your final grade.

Exams

There will be one **midterm (March 6)** and one **final exam** that will be held during the regularly scheduled exam period for this class (on **May 8**). Both exams will be cumulative of material covered to the date of the exam and will require you to demonstrate your knowledge of the texts and issues covered in class. The format will be short answer and essay questions.

Essay

You will write one 2,500-3,000 word essay either on a topic of your choice that I will have approved or on one of the topics I will assign. **The essay is due on April 17.** If you wish, you may submit a draft of the essay to me by March 27 (but no later) and I will gladly offer suggestions on how to improve it.

Contact Info and Office Hours

The best way to contact me is via email. I typically will respond within 24 hours. If you would like to meet in person, I am available during office hours. We can also try to schedule a time to meet or to speak over the phone during the week.

Academic Integrity ([http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm](http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm))

All students are required to follow the University’s Academic Integrity Code. If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the standards and
requirements of the University’s Academic Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported immediately. Please see me with any questions on the Academic Integrity Code.

Emergency Preparedness [http://www.american.edu/emergency/](http://www.american.edu/emergency/)

In an emergency, AU will use the communication tools the university has at its disposal in as timely a manner as possible using AU Alerts. These messages will provide information on what is happening, what to do, and links to available additional information. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. Our communication tools include text and email alerts, the university's home page, Facebook, and Twitter, the general information line 202-885-1100, indoor yellow AlertUs emergency beacon boxes and outdoor speakers located throughout campus. You can customize whether you receive alerts as e-mail and/or text messages. Add additional work or home phone numbers and e-mail addresses so AU Alerts reach you no matter where you are when an emergency occurs.

Academic Support [http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/](http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/)

The Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) supports the academic development and educational goals of all American University students and is committed to providing access for individuals with disabilities within the university's diverse community. Location: Mary Graydon Center (MGC), Room 243x3360; asac@american.edu; M–F: 9am–5pm
Schedule of Topics and Assignment Due Dates

Note: readings may change, in which case you will be notified ahead of time.

I. Introduction (Weeks 1-2)

Introduction

Burke and the Conservative Disposition
- Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), selections.

Contrast with:
- René Descartes, Discourse on Method (1637), excerpt from Part Two.
- John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (1689), excerpts.

II. The Major Strands of American Conservative Political Thought (Weeks 3-11)

(1) Constitutional Conservatism

(2) Agrarianism and Traditional Conservatism
Rod Dreher, Crunchy Cons, “A Crunchy-Con Manifesto,” (pp.1-2); “Chapter One: What are Crunchy Conservatives?” (pp. 4-26); The Crunchy-Con Political Agenda (pp. 232-4).

Recommended: Peruse recent issues of The American Conservative and Modern Age.

(3) Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism

Recommended: Peruse recent issues of Reason.

A note on Anti-Communism and Fusionism

***MIDTERM (Week 7 - March 6)

Week 8 (March 13): No Class / Spring Break

(4) Neoconservatism and Reform Conservatism
Recommended: Peruse recent issues of *National Affairs, The Weekly Standard* and *Commentary*.

(6) The Religious Right & Social Conservatism


Recommended: Peruse recent issues of *First Things* and *The Human Life Review*.

(7) Paleoconservatism


Recommended: Peruse recent issues of *Chronicles* and browse the *Unz Review*.

III. Critics of Conservatism (Weeks 12-13)

Conservative Critiques


Reread:


**Progressive Critiques**

***ESSAY DUE (Week 13 – April 17)***

**IV. Populism, Trumpism and the Future of Conservatism (Weeks 14-15)**

**Populism (and Elitism)**

**Trumpism**


***FINAL EXAM (Week 16 – May 8)***