

**American Political Thought II**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Boston College**

*Political Science 2342-01*

Professor Ken I. Kersch

This course surveys American Political Thought from the end of the Civil War to the election of Ronald Reagan, with a few added readings that bring matters to the present day (a separate course that I do not teach – APT I -- takes up the pre-Civil War period). It is sometimes said that the United States, being new and not European, lacks any serious philosophical tradition, with *The Federalist Papers* (before the period we treat) the only serious contribution to political thought the nation has produced. Others take the U.S. as the exemplar or apotheosis of a single political theory: Lockean liberalism. At the same time, however, American political history, with its providentialist religiosity, robust democracy, de-centered (and often besieged) localism, vibrant (and sometimes fierce) capitalism, struggles unto war over principles of civic and social equality, and (yes) liberal commitment to individual freedom, is among the most interesting and important in the world. As this list suggests, it is also full of tensions, contradictions, arguments, struggles, and battles. Is American political thought unique or “exceptional”? Is it deep or shallow? Is it a coherent whole, or a cacophonous miscellany? Does it develop over time, or remain rooted in timeless principles? Is it a tradition we should be proud of or ashamed? Is it of value, to our politics today, and beyond our shores, or merely of antiquarian interest? We will look at some of the most prominent American thinkers from the late nineteenth century to today in an attempt to answer these questions, and to avail ourselves of the insights, limits, and legacy of this thought in assessing our individual and collective pasts and futures.

The class will be part lecture and part discussion, with a considerable amount of student discussion of the texts. Students are expected to attend all classes, to do all assigned readings prior to class, and to be ready to discuss the readings and the questions they raise during our class meetings. I reserve the right to call on any student in class at any time.

**Office Hours:** I will have drop-in office hours (no appointment necessary) in my office. Other meeting times – both in person and on Zoom – are available by appointment. For those, you should email me -- best -- or otherwise speak to me to set up a time to talk.

**Class Meetings/Attendance:** Except in cases of illness or other important life issues, students are expected to attend all classes (for disability issues affecting attendance, please make arrangements through the disability office (information below) or the Dean’s office). The class will be part lecture and part discussion. Students are expected to attend all classes, to do all assigned readings prior to class, and to be ready to discuss the readings and the questions they raise during our class meetings. I reserve the right to call on any student in class at any time.

There will be **no audio or video recordings** of our class meetings. If students must miss a class or classes for an excused absence, they are expected to get the notes from a fellow

student. I am happy to meet with students during office hours to discuss the content of the class they may have missed.

**Restrictions on Computers in Class:** To minimize distractions, students are prohibited from using any type of computer or phone into class that is active/turned on (this means laptops, notebooks, smartphones, etc.) *for any purpose other than bringing up assigned readings on the screen*. Student may not browse the internet, engage in social media, chat, or use their computer for any other purpose than accessing course texts. These restrictions, and this rule, are mandatory. Exceptions will be made in individual cases for legitimate, dean-approved reasons, including disability (information below) and covid-related issues cleared through the Dean's or the disability office.

**Canvas:** We will make some use of the course Canvas page. While we will use Canvas for various exercises and for the submission of papers, you should disregard any number grades that Canvas assigns to the letter grades I give in this class. Grades are given, and kept separately, off Canvas on a private Excel sheet.

**Teaching Assistant:** I will personally be doing all the grading for this class.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act committed in an academic context, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism (attempting to pass off the work of others or computer-generated artificial intelligence as your own, in any way in any part of an assignment), and submitting for credit in this class work done for another class. All suspected violations will be reported to the Dean in accordance with University policy. A final grade of "F" for the course will be given in the event of a violation of academic integrity. Additional penalties may apply.

The University's policy on Academic Integrity is available here:

[https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/academics/sites/university-catalog/policies-procedures.html#tab-academic\\_integrity\\_policies](https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/academics/sites/university-catalog/policies-procedures.html#tab-academic_integrity_policies)

**Disability Accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact X at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD. For other students with medical, physical, psychological, and temporary disabilities should register with the Disability Services Office. Go to the following link for more details to register: <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/student-outreach-and-support-services/disability-services.html>

**ESL Assistance:** Boston College welcomes students from around the world and recognizes the unique perspectives international students bring enrich the campus community. To empower students whose first language is not English, Boston Colleges makes ESL specific resources available on campus, including ESL writing support and conversation appointments through the [Connors Family Learning Center](#). To schedule an appointment call X. A [curated list of web resources](#) is also available through the CFLC website.

**Course Requirements:** Two Quizzes (30%); Two (2) Papers (50%); Class Attendance/Participation/Ungraded Exercises (20%).

All grades will be calculated by me, on a private Excel sheet -- and not using (idiosyncratic) numbers auto-generated by Canvas, or any other calculating system.

***Required Texts:***

Isaac Kramnick and Theodore J. Lowi, *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology* (W.W. Norton, 2019)(Second Edition) [“KL”]

Ken I. Kersch, *American Political Thought: An Invitation* (Polity, 2021)

Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (City Lights Pocket Poets, 2001 [1956]).

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (Vintage, 1992 [Dial Press, 1963]).

Additional Required Materials posted on course Canvas Site [CV].

There are required assigned songs that you should listen to. You can access these on whatever streaming music service you want (Spotify, Apple Music, etc.). I provide YouTube links for the songs in cases where the YouTube video version of the song might be worth watching for its visuals (such as for watching the artist perform it live, a nice montage, etc.).

## **WEEK ONE**

### **Introduction**

Liberalism; Republicanism; Providentialism – and more....

Kersch, APT, Ch. 1 -- “Themes and Frameworks of American Political Thought”

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “1,” from Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind* (New York: New Directions, 1955)[CV]

Song:

Bob Dylan, “Highway 61 Revisited” (1965)

## **WEEK TWO**

### **Capitalism and the New State**

Kersch, APT, Ch. 5 -- “Industrial Capitalism, Reformism, and the New American State”; “Restraining Government: The Philosophy of Laissez Faire”

William Graham Sumner, “What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other” (1884); “The Challenge of Facts” (1895): KL 613.

Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth” (1889): KL 632.

Lester Ward, *Sociocracy* (1893); “Plutocracy and Paternalism” (1895): KL 672.

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1889): KL 646.

### **WEEK THREE**

Kersch, APT, Ch. 5 -- “Ideas in Action”

#### **Populism**

Ignatius Donnelly, *Cesar’s Column* (1891): KL 684.

James Baird Weaver, *A Call to Action* (1892): KL 690.

*National People’s Party Platform* (1892): KL 700.

William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” Speech (1896): KL 708.

### **WEEK FOUR**

Kersch, APT, Chapter 5 -- “Reformist and Revolutionary Critics of Industrial Capitalism: Ideas”

#### **Labor and Voices of Dissent**

Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For” (1907): KL 724.

Eugene V. Debs, “Unionism and Socialism” (1904) [CV]; “Speech to the Jury” (1918): KL 735.

Samuel Gompers, “The American Labor Movement” (1914): KL 743.

### **WEEK FIVE**

Kersch, APT, Chapter 4 -- “A New Birth of Freedom? Equality and Union After Slavery”;

Kersch, APT, Chapter 5 -- “Sex and Gender”

#### **First Wave Feminism**

U.S. Constitution, Thirteenth (1865), Fourteenth (1868), and Fifteenth (1870) Amendments: KL 817.

Victoria Woodhull, “On Constitutional Equality” (1871); “The Principles of Social Freedom” (1871): KL 755.

Susan B. Anthony, “Speech About Her Indictment” (1873): KL 764.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “Women and Economics” (1898): KL 766.

Jane Addams, “If Men Were Seeking the Franchise” (1913): KL 772.

Brent Staples, “When the Suffrage Movement Sold Out to White Supremacy” (2019)[CV]

## WEEK SIX

Kersch, APT, Chapter 5 -- “The New Pluralism: Ethnicity, Nationality, and Race”

### Empire

Josiah Strong, *Our Country* (1885): KL 789.

Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (1889-1896): KL 795.

Henry Cabot Lodge, “Speech on a Literacy Test for Immigrants” (1896): KL 798.

Albert J. Beveridge, “The March of the Flag” (1898): KL 803.

William Graham Sumner, “The Conquest of the United States by Spain” (1899): KL 809.

*Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League* (1899): KL 807.

## WEEK SEVEN

### Racial Equality

Booker T. Washington, “Atlanta Exposition Address” (1895): KL 852.

W.E.B. DuBois, “The Souls of Black Folk” (1903); “The Talented Tenth” (1903): KL 856;

“[Niagara Movement] Declaration of Principles” (1905) [CV].

Marcus Garvey, “The True Solution of the Negro Problem” (1922): KL: 875.

#### Art:

Martin Puryear, *Ladder for Booker T. Washington* [sculpture, 1996]

<https://collection.themodern.org/objects/2498/ladder-for-booker-t-washington?ctx=277374259794983c2d002889cf8883cd1e09b63b&idx=0#>

<https://art21.org/read/martin-puryear-abstraction-and-ladder-for-booker-t-washington/>

#### Songs:

Billie Holiday (1915-1959), “Strange Fruit” (1937)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnlTHvJBeP0>

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” (1900)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyS3HPInHtl>

## WEEK EIGHT

Kersch, APT, Chapter 5 -- "From Pragmatism to Progressivism"; "Pragmatism in Politics and Government"

### The Social Gospel and Progressivism

Lincoln Steffens, "The Shame of the Cities" (1904): KL 890.

Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1909): KL 909.

John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1910); *The Public and Its Problems* (1927): KL 925.

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922) [CV].

Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (1909): KL 949.

Theodore Roosevelt, *New Nationalism* (1910): KL 971.

Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom* (1913): KL 984.

## WEEK NINE

Kersch, APT, Ch. 6 -- "The New Deal Liberal Order: Collapse, Culmination, or 'Great Exception'?" ; "The New Deal"

### New Deal Thought (and Resistance)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Speech at Oglethorpe University" (1932); "Commonwealth Club Speech" (1932); "First Inaugural Address" (1933) [CV]; "The Four Freedoms" (1941); "A Second Bill of Rights" (1944): KL 1040.

Herbert Hoover, "Rugged Individualism" (1928); "The Fifth Freedom" (1941): KL 1015.

#### Songs:

Al Jolson, "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" (1931)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F4yT0KAMyo>

Woody Guthrie, "I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore" (*Dust Bowl Ballads*, 1940)

Woody Guthrie, "Do Re Mi" (*Dust Bowl Ballads*, 1940)

Woody Guthrie, "Pretty Boy Floyd" (*Dust Bowl Ballads*, 1940)

Woody Guthrie, “Jesus Christ” (1940)

Woody Guthrie, “Grand Coolee Dam” (*Columbia River Ballads*, 1941 – Commissioned by the Bonneville Power Association)

Bukka White, “Parchman Farm Blues” (1940)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFO4jmQB6zs>

## WEEK TEN

### Rebellious Undercurrents: The Fifties

Kersch, APT, Chapter 6 -- “The Fate of the Individual in a Mass Polity”; “Who Governs? The Liberal Consensus”; “Outliers in Franklin Roosevelt’s America: The ‘Radical Right,’ Marxian Left, and Marginalized African-Americans”: 240; 244; 247.

#### *The Liberal Center*

Louis Hartz, *The Concept of a Liberal Society* (1955): KL 1092.

Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* [CV]

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (1961): [CV].

#### *Conservatism/Anti-Communism*

Kersch, APT, Chapter 7 -- “Postwar Conservatism’s Political Rise”; “Conservative Political Thought”

William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale* (1951): KL 1080.

Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952): KL 1083.

Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960): KL 1101.

#### Song:

The Louvin Brothers, “Great Atomic Power” (from *Weapon of Prayer*, 1962)

Kersch, APT, Chapter 6 -- “Rumbling Undercurrents”

Kersch, APT, Chapter 7 -- “Radical Stirrings, Civil Rights, the Contentious 1960s and the Rise of Modern Conservatism”; “Mass Conformity: The Diagnosis and the Rebels”

## WEEK ELEVEN

### *Radical Stirrings*

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (1956) [CV].

C. Wright Mills, *Letter to the New Left* (1960): KL 1115.

### ***Teen Rebellion/Beat/Rock and Roll***

Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (1955).

#### Movies Trailers:

*The Wild One* (1953) [directed by Stanley Kramer; starring Marlon Brando]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIKWlx-Yxkg>

*Rebel Without a Cause* (trailer) [starring James Dean](1955)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAlzg0S51GY>

#### Songs:

Big Joe Turner, “Shake, Rattle, and Roll”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhELpSeeipg>

Bill Haley and the Comets, “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” (1954)

[Lyrics of both versions on CV]

Little Richard, “Good Golly Miss Molly” (1958)

The Shangri-Las, “Leader of the Pack” (1965)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM\\_99DtI0tE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM_99DtI0tE)

The Shirelles, “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow” (1964) (written by Carole King)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAXb1vnb520>

Elvis Presley, “Jailhouse Rock”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfrC8PAQtlg>

## **WEEK TWELVE**

### **The Sixties**

Kersch, APT, Chapter 7 -- “Civil Rights Resistance,” “Black Nationalism”



### ***Civil Rights and Black Power***

Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Nonviolence” (1957); “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963): KL 1133.

Songs:

John Coltrane, “Alabama” (1963)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saN1BwlxJxA>

Sam Cooke, “A Change is Gonna Come” (1963)

Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam” (1964)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ25-U3jNWM>

The Impressions, “People Get Ready” (1965)

The Staple Singers, “Why? (Am I Treated So Bad)” (1967)

Bob Dylan (joined by Joan Baez), “When the Ship Comes In” (live, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963)[Start at 4:05/End 7:15]

[Both this live version and the album/studio version of this song are also available on Spotify]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IgSj-2gQ54>

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963)

Song:

The Carter Family, “Rock of Ages” (1930)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmXgREeRf5c>

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964): KL 1147.

Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation” (1966): KL 1153.

Songs:

Gil Scott Heron, “Whitey on the Moon” (1970)

Gil Scott Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” (1970)

The Last Poets, “Black Is,” “White Man’s Got a God Complex,” “Black People What Y’All Gon Do,” “Black Wish” (1971)

Amiri Baraka, “It’s Nation Time/Pull the Covers Off” (1972)

Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement” (1965) [CV].

The Movement for Black Lives Platform (2016): KL 1507.

Tracy K. Smith, “Declaration” (2018) [CV].

### WEEK THIRTEEN/FOURTEEN

#### *The New Left*

Kersch, APT, Chapter 7-- “The New Left”

Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (1962): KL 1121.  
Mario Savio, “An End to History,” (1964) [CV]

#### *Yippies/Hippies/Counterculture*

Kersch, APT, Chapter 7 -- “The Full Flowering: The Late 1960s Counterculture”

William F. Buckley, Jr. TV interview of Allen Ginsberg on *Firing Line*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKBAJYceQ54>

Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It* (1968) [CV]

Jerry Rubin, “Yippie Manifesto” (1969): KL 1168

#### Songs:

Bob Dylan, “Song to Woody” (1962)

Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone” (1965)

The Jefferson Airplane, “D.C.B.A.-25” (1967)(from *Surrealistic Pillow*)

*Psych Out* (Film, Opening Sequence: Music: The Strawberry Alarm Clock) (1968)(featuring “Pretty Song from Psyche Out”)(watch full intro -- up to 6:20)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoNvDYe9QHQ>

*Easy Rider* (Film, Opening Credits; d. Dennis Hopper)(1969)(featuring Steppenwolf, “Born to be Wild”)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-OWEDge0BM>

Canned Heat, “Goin Up the Country” (1969) (live at Woodstock):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf0Dm-OaTNk>

Susan Sontag, “What’s Happening in America” (1966) [CV]

Joan Didion, “Slouching Toward Bethlehem” (1967) [CV]

Joan Didion, “The White Album” (1968-1978) [CV]

#### Songs:

Bob Dylan, “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” (1965)

Barry McGuire, “Eve of Destruction” (Live, Hullabaloo, 1965)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwYNWYaS3bl>

Jimi Hendrix, “Star Spangled Banner” (1969) (Live at Woodstock)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CcWIKtBzgs>

The Velvet Underground and Nico, “I’m Waiting for My Man” (1967)

### **The New Movements of the Late Sixties and the Seventies**

Kersch, APT, Ch. 8 --“The Identity and Post-Materialist Left, The New Right, and Third-Way Liberalism,” “Sex and Gender,” “The Intervention of Feminist Women of Color,” “Gay Liberation and the Politics of LGBTQ+ Identity,” “Racial and Ethnic Identity and Pride: The Chicano and American Indian Movements, and Beyond”

#### ***Second Wave Feminism***

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963): KL 1158.

N.O.W. “Bill of Rights” (1967): KL 1164.

*Redstockings Manifesto* (1969): KL 1165.

Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (1970) [CV].

Phyllis Schlafly, “The Power of the Positive Woman” (1977) [CV].

#### Songs:

The Crystals, “He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)” (1963)

Jack Jones, “Wives and Lovers” (1965) (Burt Bacharach and Hal David)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZbusN-n8rE>

Loretta Lynn, “One’s on the Way”

Loretta Lynn, “The Pill” (1975)

Helen Reddy, “I am Woman” (1975)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq1BvVAkzyY>

The Mary Tyler Moore Show [Theme Song/Opening Credit Sequence] (1970-1977)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1GC6yXZ4e4>

### ***Identity/Power/Culture***

Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, “I am Joaquin” (1969) [CV]

AIM “Twenty Points” (1972) [CV]

Phyllis Schlafly, “The Power of the Positive Woman” (1977) [CV].

Cherrie Moraga, “La Guera” (1981): KL 1250.

bell hooks, “Feminist Theory from Margin to Center” (1984): KL 1264.

Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble” (1990): KL 1287.

Harry Hay, “What Gay Consciousness Brings, and Has Brought, to the Hetero Left” (1991): KL 1318.

### **Songs:**

Janis Ian, “At Seventeen” (Live, Old Grey Whistle Test, 1976)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMUz2TNMvL0>

Tom Robinson Band, “Glad to Be Gay” (Live, Manchester, UK 1977)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmR3p3-LN94>

### **Conservatism**

Kersch, APT, Chapter 8 -- “The New Right”

Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement” (1960): KL 1120.

Milton Friedman, *Free to Choose* (1980) KL 1219.  
 Norman Podhoretz, “The Adversary Culture and the New Class” [CV]  
 Phyllis Schlafly, “The Power of the Positive Woman” (1977) [CV].

Songs:

The Louvin Brothers, “There’s a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere”  
 (from *Weapon of Prayer* (1962))

Roy Acuff, “Stuck Up Blues” (1941)

Staff Sgt. Barry Sadler, “The Ballad of the Green Berets” (1966)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5WJJVSE\\_BE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5WJJVSE_BE)

Merle Haggard (and The Strangers), “The Fightin’ Side of Me” (1968)

Merle Haggard (and The Strangers), “Okie from Muskogee” (1968)

Also, see cover version by: The Beach Boys and the Grateful Dead, “Okie  
 from Muskogee” (Live, Fillmore East, 1971:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDBKIHSp4ss>)

Merle Haggard, “Working Man Blues” (1969)

Merle Haggard (and The Strangers), “Hungry Eyes” (1969)

C. Everett Koop and Francis Schaeffer, *What Ever Happened to the Human Race?* [CV]  
 Ronald Reagan, “First Inaugural Address”: KL 1258.

## **Trumpism**

Publius Decius Mus, “The Flight 93 Election” (2016): KL 1485.

Donald J. Trump, “Inaugural Address” (2017): KL 1514.

Songs:

Hank Williams, Jr., “A Country Boy Can Survive”

Hank Williams, Jr., “If Heaven Ain’t a Lot Like Dixie”

Hank Williams, Jr., “If the South Woulda Won”

## **Conclusion/Future**

Kersch, APT, Chapter 8 -- “Third Way (Neo)Liberalism”

Kersch, APT, Chapter 9 -- "Conclusion"

Songs:

Merle Haggard, "Are the Good Times Really Over? (I Wish a Buck Was Still Silver)" (1982)

Nina Simone, "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" (1967)