

“I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe.”

-- Jefferson, letter to Madison, Dec. 20, 1787

“...it may be proved that no society can make a perpetual constitution, even a perpetual law. The earth belongs always to the living generation. They may manage it then, and what proceeds from it, as they please, during their usufruct. They are masters too of their own persons and may govern them as they please. But persons and property make the sum of the objects of government. The constitution and the laws of their predecessors [are] extinguished then in their natural course with those who gave them being.”

-- Jefferson, letter to Madison, Sept. 6, 1789

POLI 7903/7991
AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
Spring 2007

American Political Development (APD) is a resurgent subfield in Political Science. It tacitly acknowledges the distinctiveness of the American Founding, and in particular of the framing of the Constitution, and proceeds to examine how American politics and government have changed since their original design. As currently formulated, APD stands in contrast to the traditional field of American Political Thought (call it APT): APD is especially interested in the building of the national state, a project that its advocates often see as proceeding despite the skepticism about the state in most APT. APD is especially concerned with political economy, while APT concentrates on ideas. Both approaches to our politics seem to agree that it is a mark of American exceptionalism that America is sometimes understood as an idea -- though they differ in their response to this peculiar fact. APD focuses on political change, in particular on “durable shifts in governing authority.” It complements approaches to the study of American governance that take for granted continuity in the American political system or that concentrate on patterns and relationships that characterize a particular moment in political time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Five 2-page papers on the reading, due in class
- 15-20 page research or literature review paper, presented in draft form or outline and due in final form at the end of the semester

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

All the books listed on the syllabus should be available at the LSU Union. Bookstore.

WEBSITE

A BlackBoard website will be established for this course, to include bibliographies, etc.

SYLLABUS OF READINGS

I. Developing the American State

Mon., 1/22 Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge, 2004)

Mon., 1/29 Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (Cambridge, 1982)

II. Developing American Democracy

Mon., 2/5 James Morone, *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of Democratic Government* (Yale, 1998)

Mon., 2/12 Richard Valelly, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement* (Chicago, 2004)

III. The Paradigm of Developing Ideas

Mon., 2/26 Harry Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided* (rev. Chicago, 1999; orig. 1958)

Mon., 3/5 *Crisis of the House Divided*

Mon., 3/12 James W. Ceaser, *Nature and History in American Political Development* (Harvard, 2006)

IV. Constitutional Development

Mon., 3/19 Keith Whittington, *Constitutional Construction* (Harvard, 1999)

Mon., 3/26 Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Harvard, 2002)

V. American Political Development and the World at Large

Mon., 4/9 Jeremy Rabkin, *Law Without Nations? Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States* (Princeton, 2005)

VI. Presentation of Research

Mon., 4/16

Mon., 4/23

Mon., 4/30