

The Conservative Movement in America

PSC 421

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Books

The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945, by George Nash
Right Wing Critics of American Conservatism, by George Hawley

Course Description

Terms like right and left, liberal and conservative, and progressive and reactionary are commonly used in political discourse. However, while frequently uttered, these words are rarely defined. What does it mean to be a conservative, a libertarian, or a liberal? Do these terms mean the same thing in all places and contexts? Have they evolved over time? This class will help answer these and other questions by examining the origins and history of the conservative political movement in the United States of America. The course will follow the development of this ideology from its origins as a small movement of journalists and intellectuals to the dominant ideology of the Republican Party, and ultimately, for a time, the dominant ideology in the United States.

This course will explain how conservatism coalesced around a set of principles that, prior to the post-war period, did not appear to be connected, nor were they even necessarily considered right-wing. The course will explain how conservatives confronted what was then the dominant liberal ideology, and how it dealt with challengers on the political right, especially libertarians whose role in the conservative movement has long been uncertain. It will discuss the rise of the neoconservatives, and their role in shaping the conservative movement and the Republican Party. Finally, it will discuss the conservative movement in the 21st century, explaining the many challenges that the conservative movement, and the Republican Party with which it is intimately intertwined, will face in the decades ahead.

This class will focus primarily on texts written from a conservative or right-wing perspective. To counter every reading with an additional selection from a liberal or left-wing author would not be possible, given the nature of this class. Our main purpose is to understand the ideas that motivate the right in America. That said, the purpose of this class is not indoctrination. In our class discussions, I encourage students to engage in vigorous, respectful discussion of the ideas presented, noting any weaknesses they perceive in the arguments we consider. Additionally, for their second book review, students will read and critique a book from a non-conservative perspective.

This class will examine all of these issues dispassionately. Our goal is not to praise or condemn the conservative movement in America, but to understand it. This understanding will be useful for all students of American politics, regardless of their personal political persuasions.

Written assignments will account for the overwhelming majority of each student's grade. Two written book reviews will account for fifty percent of the final grade. Forty percent of the final grade will be based on student performance on written midterm and final exams. A student who does not demonstrate writing skills appropriate for an upper-division undergraduate course will not receive a passing grade,

regardless of that student's performance in other aspects of the class. In written assignments, I expect students to demonstrate proper spelling and grammar, and use appropriate citations. I additionally expect students to demonstrate competence in making a compelling argument in writing, to demonstrate their ability to write and defend a specific thesis, using logical arguments and presented in a well-organized manner. Students will also be expected to demonstrate their ability to succinctly summarize complex material.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

- understand the various meanings and historical context of terms like left and right, liberal and conservative, and progressive and reactionary.
- understand the major ideological divisions in the United States in the mid-20th century, and how those divisions created stable political coalitions.
- have a broad familiarity with the so-called "conservative canon" – those books that shaped the principles of the conservative movement; additionally, students will demonstrate expertise on one of these books in their first book review.
- have a broad familiarity with the major critiques of American conservatism; additionally, students will demonstrate expertise about one or more of these critiques in their second book review.
- improve their ability to craft a tightly-focused written argument.

Classroom Policies and Instructor Availability

I expect all students to behave professionally in this course. I am intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, reading newspapers, and especially the ringing of cell phones or pagers. Laptops may be used for professional purposes, but not for playing games or surfing the Internet. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom in order to preserve the learning environment for other students. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others' opinions. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom activities.

If students would like to speak with me outside of class time, feel free to stop by my office (306 ten Hoor Hall) during regularly scheduled office hours (Tuesdays and Thursdays 11am-noon). If students are unable to attend office hours, but would like to meet with me, please contact me via email (ghawley@ua.edu) to arrange an appointment. I am typically quick to respond to such emails. I, unfortunately, cannot guarantee that I will be able to meet with students that come to my office without first scheduling a time to see me.

Academic Integrity

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Alabama has detailed its policies on academic integrity (<http://www.studenthandbook.ua.edu/conduct.html>). Students should acquaint themselves with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work by a student in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Student Disabilities

Any student with disabilities of any kind (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact Professor Hawley and the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. We will ensure that all necessary accommodations will be made.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. Additional course information will be posted using Blackboard Learn.

SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](http://www.nws.gov) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students

- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website at <http://wvuatv.com/content/weather>. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check <http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts> for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

Grading

Student grades will be determined by four elements.

Attendance and participation: 10 percent

Midterm exam: 20 percent

Final exam: 20 percent

Book review one: 25 percent

Book review two: 25 percent

Attendance and participation

In this class, much of our learning will actually occur in the classroom, both from lecture and discussion. Thus attendance is important. Students may miss up to two class periods without any penalty. After missing two or more classes, students will lose one point from their participation grade for every additional missed class, unless they provide a valid excuse for their absences.

Midterm and final exam

Both the midterm and final exam will be written, blue book exams. In these exams, students will demonstrate their mastery of the material. They should take this as an opportunity to show that they have absorbed the material up that point in the course. This is a time to show their knowledge, rather than make an original argument.

Book reviews

The book reviews are an opportunity to both demonstrate knowledge and make an original argument. Students will show their ability to quickly and accurately summarize a book and make an argument of their own.

Over the course of the semester, students will complete two book reviews of books of their choice. It is important to me that all students, at some point in the course, wrestle with ideas with which they disagree.

The first review will cover a book that is considered a foundational or an influential text of the conservative movement or a book that had a strong influence on later conservative thinkers. Many of my recommended books were written in the early years of the conservative movement, or even before the movement began. Some of these books are primarily or even exclusively on economic issues, some focus on social issues, others emphasize foreign policy, and others touch on all of these issues. I advise students to read basic summaries and choose books that most closely match their own interests, rather than just choosing the shortest possible book.

The second review will examine a book that criticizes the conservative movement, from either the left or the right. These are books that attack the basic philosophical premises of the conservative movement, rather than focusing on specific policy issues or personalities within the Republican Party.

In these reviews, students will summarize and critique the major arguments of the book. As they read, students should consider the following questions, though all of these questions do not need to be addressed in their papers: what are the book's strengths and weaknesses? What are possible counterarguments or objections to the author's primary argument? Are there any obvious contradictions in the author's argument? Are the arguments made in the book still relevant? How might the claims made in the book be relevant to current debates?

The best papers will provide a clear thesis, presented early in the paper, which is subsequently advanced in the following paragraph. Papers should be between six and nine pages, including a works cited page.

After the papers are complete, students will briefly discuss their book, its argument, and their critique in class.

Below are some suggested books for students review. If there is a book you wish to review that is not on this list, you may bring me your suggestion, and I will determine if your requested book is appropriate for the assignment (and if you have a really good idea, I will likely add it to this list in future semesters).

Most of these books will be available in our library. If your preferred book is checked out or otherwise unavailable, most are available from Amazon at a very affordable price. You also have the option of choosing a different book if you cannot easily obtain a copy of your first choice.

Book Suggestions for Paper 1

Note: page counts may differ according to edition.

Our Enemy, The State, Albert Jay Nock (226 pages)
Ideas Have Consequences, Richard Weaver (224 pages)
Visions of Order, Richard Weaver (153 pages)
The Conservative Mind, Russell Kirk (534 pages)
The Roots of American Order, Russell Kirk (534 pages)
Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays, Michael Oakeshott (582 pages)
In Defense of Freedom, Frank Meyer (261 pages)
Suicide of the West, James Burnham (400 pages)
Witness, Whitaker Chambers (808 pages)
God and Man at Yale, William F. Buckley, Jr. (240 pages)
The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition, Kendall and Carey (200 pages)
The Road to Serfdom, F.A. Hayek (283 pages)
The Fatal Conceit, F.A. Hayek (194 pages)
The Constitution of Liberty, F.A. Hayek (688 pages)
Capitalism and Freedom, Milton Friedman (230 pages)

Free to Choose, Milton and Rose Friedman (338 pages)
Twilight of Authority, Robert Nisbet (278 pages)
The Quest for Community, Robert Nisbet (330 pages)
On the Democratic Idea in America, Irving Kristol (149 pages)
Neoconservatism, Irving Kristol (512 pages)
The Closing of the American Mind, Allan Bloom (400 pages)
A Conflict of Visions, Thomas Sowell (352 pages)
Ethnic America, Thomas Sowell (353 pages)
The Tempting of America, Robert Bork (448 pages)
Losing Ground, Charles Murray (352 pages)
A Matter of Interpretation, Antonin Scalia (176 pages)
The Case for Democracy, Sharansky and Dermer (352 pages)
Leave Us Alone, Grover Norquist (384 pages)

Book Suggestions for Paper 2

Note: This suggestion is divided between those who critiqued conservatism from a left-wing or a right-wing perspective. Students may choose from either category.

In this class, it is important that all students engage with material from different points on the ideological spectrum. Many of the books in the list above that had a profound influence on conservative thinking were written from a libertarian perspective (especially those books by Hayek and Friedman). If the book for the first review might be classified as a libertarian book, for the second review you must choose a book from a different perspective – either from a progressive author or an author making a different kind of right-wing argument. If you have any doubts about your choice for your second book, please speak with me before beginning the assignment.

Mainstream conservatism critiqued from a conservative or libertarian perspective

Ain't My America, Bill Kauffman (304 pages)
A Republic, Not an Empire, Patrick Buchanan (437 pages)
Where the Right Went Wrong, Patrick Buchanan (288 pages)
The Betrayal of the American Right, Murray Rothbard (231 pages)
Reclaiming the American Right, Justin Raimondo (375 pages)
Conservatism in America, Paul Gottfried (189 pages)
The Revolution, Ron Paul (191 pages)
Revolution from the Middle, Sam Francis (250 pages)
Revolt from the Heartland, Joseph Scotchie (135 pages)
Radical Libertarianism: A Right-Wing Alternative, Jerome Tuccille (109 pages)
Real Dissent, Thomas Woods (347 pages)

Mainstream conservatism critiqued from a liberal perspective

Why the Right Went Wrong, E.J. Dionne (544 pages)
The Death of Conservatism, Sam Tanenhaus (160 pages)
The Affluent Society, John Kenneth Galbraith (288 pages)
Up from Conservatism, Michael Lind (304 pages)
A People's History of the United States, Howard Zinn (729 pages)
Rule and Ruin, Geoffrey Kabaservice (512 pages)
Understanding Power, Noam Chomsky (416 pages)

Blinded by the Right, David Brock (352 pages)
Why the Religious Right is Wrong, Rob Boston (257 pages)
The Conscience of a Liberal, Paul Krugman (352 pages)
Reason, Robert Reich (272 pages)
What's the Matter with Kansas? Thomas Frank (322 pages)
The Wrecking Crew, Thomas Frank (384 pages)
Liberal Pluralism, William Galston (152 pages)
Unequal Democracy, Larry Bartels (325 pages)
The Strange Death of Republican America, Sidney Blumenthal (339 pages)
The Party is Over, Mike Lofgren (256 pages)
American Fascists, Chris Hedges (274 pages)
The Best Democracy Money Can Buy, Greg Palast (416 pages)
The Reactionary Mind, Corey Robin (305 pages)
Dog Whistle Politics, Ian Haney Lopez (303 pages)

Course Schedule

- August 23: First day of class. No readings.
- August 28: Definitions
“What is Left? What is Right?” *The American Conservative*, 2006.
<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/what-is-left-what-is-right/>
- August 30: Precursors to conservatism 1

Robert M. Crunden, “Introduction,” in *The Superfluous Men*. To be distributed.
Albert Jay Nock, “Isaiah's Job,” <https://mises.org/library/isaiahs-job>
- September 4: Precursors to conservatism 2 (early libertarians)

Nash, chapter 1, “The Revolt of the Libertarians”
- September 6: Precursors to conservatism 3 (early traditionalists)

Nash, chapter 2, “The Revolt Against the Masses”
- September 11: Precursors to conservatism 4

Twelve Southerners, “Introduction: A Statement of Principles,” from *I'll Take My Stand*.
To be distributed.
- September 13: The Cold War and the Right 1

Nash, Chapter 4, “A Nightmare in Red.”
- September 18: The Cold War and the Right 2

James Burnham, “Communism: The Struggle for the World.” To be distributed

William F. Buckley Jr., “The Party and the Deep Blue Sea.” To be distributed

- September 20: The new case for free markets 1
Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson*. Excerpt to be distributed.
- September 25: Milton Friedman, "Capitalism and Freedom: A Concluding Note." Excerpt to be distributed.
- September 27: Consolidating a movement 1
Nash, Chapter 5, "Consolidation."
- October 2: Consolidating a movement 2
Nash, Chapter 6: "Fission and Fusion."
- October 4: Consolidating a movement 3
Frank Meyer, *The Theme is Freedom*. Excerpt to be distributed
- October 9: The conservative movement and the Republican Party 1
Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Excerpt to be distributed
- *** Paper 1 Due October 9***
- October 11: The conservative movement and the Republican Party 2
Richard A. Viguerie, *The New Right*. Excerpt to be distributed
- October 16: Conservatism and race in the 1960s
Milton Friedman, "Capitalism and Discrimination." To be distributed
National Review, "Why the South Must Prevail." To be distributed
Richard Weaver, "Integration is Communization." To be distributed
- October 23: The Neoconservatives 1
Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir." To be distributed.
Russell Kirk, "Neoconservatives: An Endangered Species?" To be distributed.
- October 25: (No Class)
- October 30: Midterm Exam
- November 1: Libertarians 1

- Hawley, Chapter 5
- November 6: Libertarians 2
Hawley, Chapter 6
- November 8: Paleoconservatism
Hawley, Chapter 7
- November 13: Battles within conservatism
Hawley, Chapter 2
- November 15: Conservatism's high-water mark
Nash, Chapter 12
- November 20: Conservatism and the welfare state 1
Charles Murray, *Coming Apart*, excerpt to be distributed
Irving Kristol, "The Republican Future," to be distributed.
- November 27: Conservative foreign policy after the Cold War 1
Project for a New American Century, "Rebuilding America's Defenses," to be distributed
Patrick Buchanan, "America First – and Second and Third," to be distributed
George W. Bush's second inaugural address, to be distributed
- November 29: Conservatism and the religious right
God's Own Party, excerpt to be distributed
- December 4: Conservatism today 1
Ross Douthat and Reiham Salam, *Grand New Party*, excerpt to be distributed
- December 6: Conservatism's future
Hawley, Chapter 10

*** Final Paper and any extra credit due last day of class

Final Exam: December 12, 8:00am.