

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**  
**Vision in Literature and Thought**

Political Science 2051  
Louisiana State University

Fall 2015  
MWF 12:30-1:20pm  
Himes Hall 253

“Ideally democracy is a permanently valid form of social and political organization which does justice to two dimensions of human existence: to man’s spiritual stature and his social character; to the uniqueness and variety of life, as well as to the common necessities of all men.”

Reinhold Niebuhr

“When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

**PART I: VISION AND CONFLICT**

**WEEK 1 (Aug. 24, 26, 28)—Introduction: What is America?**

Welcome! Introduction to the Course  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”  
John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” excerpt  
Declaration of Independence

**WEEK 2 (Aug. 31, Sept. 2, 4)—Revolution**

John Adams, selections

\*No class Wednesday, Sept. 2 or Friday, Sept. 4 (Dr. Kitch at APSA)\*

**WEEK 3 (Sept. 7, 9, 11)—Thoughts on Free Government**

Articles of Confederation  
*Federalist Papers* 1, 2, 10, 51

\*No class Monday, Sept. 7 (LABOR DAY!)\*

**WEEK 4 (Sept. 14, 16, 18)—Constitution**

U.S. Constitution of 1787  
Bill of Rights

WEEK 5 (Sept. 21)—**Individualism and Democracy**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1840)  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Politics” (1849)  
Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849)

(Sept. 23, 25)—**Conflict and Unrest**

Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (1850)

WEEK 6 (Sept. 28, 30, Oct. 2)—**Conflict and Unrest**

Angelina Grimke, “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South” (1836)  
Susan B. Anthony, “Speech About Her Indictment” (1873)  
Susan B. Anthony, “Woman’s Rights to the Suffrage” (1873)  
George Fitzhugh, “Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters” (1857)  
Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)  
Andrew Jackson, “State of the Union” (1830)  
Chief Joseph, “An Indian’s View of Indian Affairs” (1879)  
Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Peoria, Illinois” (1854)  
*Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)  
James Henry Hammond, “‘Mud Sill’ Speech” (1858)  
Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973)

WEEK 7 (Oct. 5, 7, 9)—**Civil War**

Mississippi Declaration of Secession (1861)  
Jefferson Davis, Farewell Address (1861)  
Abraham Lincoln, “First Inaugural Address” (1861)  
Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” (1863)  
Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address” (1865)

**\*EXAM I\*** Monday, Oct. 5

**PART II: VISION AND TRIAL**

WEEK 8 (Oct. 12, 14, 16)—**Post-War**

Reconstruction Amendments (13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>)  
*Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)  
Langston Hughes, “Let America Be America Again” (1938)  
Lillian Smith, “When I Was a Child” (1949)  
C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, excerpt (1955)

**\*ANALYTICAL ESSAY I DUE\*** Monday, Oct. 12

WEEK 9 (Oct. 19, 21, 23)—**Indefinite Improvement, or Conquest and Rest**

Tocqueville, selections on frontier and improvement (1840)  
John F. Kennedy, "Moon Speech" (1962)  
Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*, selections (1951)  
Ellen Ruppel Shell, "In Praise of Downtime" (2015)

\*No class Friday, Oct. 23 (Enjoy!)\*

WEEK 10 (Oct. 26, 28, 30)—**Progressive Intent**

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Dover)  
Jane Addams, selected essays

\*No class Friday, Oct. 30 (LSU FALL HOLIDAY!)\*

WEEK 11 (Nov. 2, 4, 6)—**WWII**

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms" (1941)  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "A Second Bill of Rights" (1944)  
Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness" (1944)

\***EXAM II**\* Friday, Nov. 6

### PART III: VISION AND HOPE

WEEK 12 (Nov. 9, 11, 13)—**Civil Rights**

Bayard Rustin, "Twenty-two Days on a Chain Gang" (1949)  
*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)  
"Southern Manifesto" (1956)  
Freedom songs

\***ANALYTICAL ESSAY II DUE**\* Friday, Nov. 13

WEEK 13 (Nov. 16, 18, 20)—**Civil Rights**

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" (1957)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Most Durable Power" (1957)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Power of Nonviolence" (1957)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Experiment in Love" (1958)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (1963)  
Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Eulogy for the Martyred Children" (1963)

WEEK 14 (Nov. 23, 25, 27)—**Civil Rights**

Barack Obama, “Charleston Eulogy: Amazing Grace” (2015)

\*No class Wednesday, Nov. 25, or Friday, Nov. 27—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!\*

WEEK 15 (Nov. 30, Dec. 2, 4)—**Questions on American Life**

Wendell Berry, *Fidelity* (1993)

\***REFLECTION ESSAY DUE**\* Monday, Nov. 30

WEEK 16 (Finals Week)

\***FINAL EXAM**\* 12:30-2:30pm, Thursday, Dec. 10

---

Dr. Sarah Beth Kitch

Email: svosbu2@tigers.lsu.edu

Office: Stubbs Hall 233

Office Hours: 2-3pm, Monday and Wednesday, and by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this course is to achieve an understanding of America as an idea and a political community. Institutions such as the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of American government are integral to the life of the political community. In addition, and perhaps more fundamentally, we seek to understand American national identity through American literature and political thought. As we encounter significant works of American literature and political thought, we want to gain a vivid sense of the various and perhaps conflicting ideas that inform the American spirit. Our goal, throughout this semester, is to trace the following **key themes** in our texts:

**American Identity:** What is America and what can it become? What does it mean to be and to become an American citizen? What do Americans value? What assumptions do they hold? How do Americans express themselves in art, literature, speech? Has the idea of “what it means to be an American” changed; and if so, how? Where do we find the best and worst visions of American identity?

**American Community:** How have the values of freedom and equality been worked out in American experience? What is the nature of American democracy? What are the internal or external threats to American democracy?

**American Landscape:** How do Americans relate to nature? How has Americans’ interaction with the frontier shaped their aims and character?

**American Industry:** How have science and the development of technologies changed our conception of persons and landscape? What are the effects of the free market system on American society?

**Additional Objectives:** This course is an approved general education credit for the social sciences; and, as such, it is designed to contribute to your understanding of self and of culture. In this light, the course is intended to acquaint you with some of the classic narratives and philosophies of western civilization, so as to give you an understanding of other cultures and other times; to acquaint you with the some of the moral and ethical issues of politics; and to encourage critical and analytical thinking, as well as a precise and graceful use of language. As a social science general education elective this course is designed to enhance your understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Exam I = 10%	Monday, Oct. 5
Exam II = 15%	Friday, Nov. 6
Final Exam = 20%	12:30-2:30pm, Thursday, Dec. 10
Five quizzes = 25%	Unannounced. <i>You will want to complete all reading assignments.</i>
Analytical Essay 1 = 10%	Monday, Oct. 12
Analytical Essay 2 = 10%	Friday, Nov. 13
Reflection Essay = 10%	Monday, Nov. 30

<b>Grading Scale</b>
A+ = 97-100
A = 93-96
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62
F = <60

Effective this fall (2015), LSU has introduced a plus/minus grading scale for final course grades. Only your final grade for the overall course will be reported according to the plus/minus scale.

Your course grade is based on three exams (10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent), five quizzes (5 percent each, for a total of 25 percent), and three short (2-3 page) essays (10 percent each). You will be provided with an opportunity to ask questions in advance of the exams. You will need a Scantron (the long, narrow Scantron) for all of your exams (available at the LSU bookstore or free at the student government office). Your final exam is in our classroom, **12:30-2:30pm, Thursday, December 10**. Consider organizing your own group study, as it facilitates your understanding of the material and challenges you to think about the major questions and arguments of each text. *All* late material will be penalized. Announcements and readings for **bonus opportunities** will be posted on Moodle or distributed in class. I reserve the right to administer unannounced bonus quizzes.

This semester, I will ask you to write two analytical essays and one reflection essay. I will provide you with a list of suggested topics, as well as a detailed description of the nature of these assignments.

**READING, ATTENDANCE, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Your success in this class depends upon your consistent attendance, participation, and integrity. Before each class period, you should read the assigned materials and thoughtfully consider their significance for our study. Our task is to read sympathetically in order to read critically – that is, to understand what each author is asking and arguing, and then to thoughtfully evaluate his work. Of course, you should **bring your copy of the text to class**. At the end of each class period I will announce the readings for the next class period.

### **ETIQUETTE AND ELECTRONICS IN CLASS**

Classroom etiquette acknowledges that class time is set apart for a special purpose and requires students to respect others in word and in deed. Make sure you are ready to begin when our class starts and wait until it is over to pack your notes and belongings. Be attentive to what others say, and make an effort to contribute to class discussions. Know that, unless there is an emergency, leaving before class is over is unacceptable. **The use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones is *not* allowed in class**, except for official note-takers. Using pen and paper instead limits the distractions your laptop presents to you and your neighbor. Studies show using pen and paper also contributes to better understanding and more effective learning overall. Audio recorders are allowed, but strictly for your personal use.

### **MOODLE**

Login to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings and other course materials (posted as PDF files or Internet links) as well as your grades.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*\*Students should purchase the following books (available at the LSU bookstore and through online retailers such as Amazon, AbeBooks, etc.).*

*\*Students should print all other selections from the class Moodle page.*

Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* [Dover, ISBN: 048629899X]

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* [Dover, ISBN: 0486220125]

Wendell Berry, *Fidelity* [Pantheon, ISBN: 0679748318]