

Freedom in America

There is perhaps no term so thoroughly associated with the United States as freedom. America has long taken pride in being the “land of the free” and the “leader of the free world.” This course will explore the meaning of freedom in the context of American history, the tension between freedom and equality, American failures to live up to a commitment to freedom, and the ways in which our conceptions of freedom have shaped the development of America’s political institutions.

Required Texts

Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop
The Liberty Reader, edited by David Miller
Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader edited by Mason I. Lowance
The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism edited by Milkis and Mileiur
The Politics of Major Policy Reform in Postwar America by Milkis and Jenkins
Other readings will be made available to students online.

Evaluation

Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance – 25%
Midterm Exam – 25%
Paper – 25%
Final – 25%

Class Participation and Attendance

This course requires that each student complete the readings each week to participate actively in class discussions. Students should read the material and review the reading questions prior to every class. Students will be called to answer questions if there are no volunteers. Perfect attendance is expected. If a student must miss due to an illness, death in the family, school function, or some other understandable reason they should get in touch with the professor to work out an alternative assignment.

Paper

Students are required to select a historical struggle for freedom – which they can interpret fairly broadly – and highlight how this struggle shaped American public policy or institutional development in a short 5-10 paper.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of two short answer essays covering the course material up until this point in the semester.

Final Exam

The Final will consist of thirty multiple-choice questions from the second half of the semester, five short answer questions (one to two paragraphs each), and a final essay. Both the short answer and essay will be cumulative

Schedule of Readings and Class Topics

Week 1 – Intro to the Course and Two Concepts of Liberty

Required Readings:

Isiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” in *The Liberty Reader*

PART 1 – THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Week 2 – British Oppression and American Freedom

Required Readings:

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence”

Week 3 – The Constitution and Freedom

Required Readings:

The US Constitution

Federalist 1, 10, 49, 73

PART 2 – FREEDOM AND EQUALITY

Week 4 – The Passion for Equality

Required Readings:

Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol II, Part 2, Chapters 1 – 4, 10 – 11; Part 3, Chapters 1, 9-14

Week 5 – The Danger of Equality to Freedom

Required Readings:

Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol II, Part 4, Chapters 1 – 8

Week 6 – Midterm Exam

PART 3 – SLAVERY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Week 7 – The Fight Against Slavery

Required Readings:

Fredrick Douglass, “What To the Slave Is the Fourth of July”

William Lloyd Garrison, "An Address to the British Antislavery Society"
William Ellery Channing, "Slavery"
James Freeman Clarke, "Slavery in the United States"

Week 8 – Civil Rights

Required Readings:

Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter From A Birmingham Jail"
Malcom X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Week 9 – Civil Rights and Public Policy

Required Readings:

Brown v Board of Education
Shep Melnick, "Courts and Agencies in the American Civil Rights State" in Jenkins & Milkis
Hugh Graham, "The Great Society's Civil Rights Legacy" in Jenkins & Milkis

PART 4 – WOMAN RIGHTS

Week 10 – Woman's Suffrage

Required Readings:

Grimke, "Human Rights Not Founded On Sex"
Stanton, "Seneca Falls Declaration" and "Address to the New York Legislature"

Week 11 – Woman's Liberation (Paper Due This Week)

Required Readings:

Audra Lord, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" and "The Masters Tools Will Never Dismantle the Masters House"
Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Selections)

PART 5 – The Second Bill of Rights

Week 12 – FDR and the Second Bill of Rights

Required Readings:

FDR, "Commonwealth Club Address"
FDR, "1936 DNC Acceptance Speech"
FDR, "1944 State of the Union"
FDR, "Second Bill of Rights"

Week 13 – The New Deal State

Required Readings:

Milkis, "FDR, the Economic Constitutional Order, and the New
Politics of Presidential Leadership" in Milkis & Mileur
Lichtenstein, "Politicized Unions and the New Deal Model" in
Milkis & Mileur
Story, "The Deal and Higher Education" in Milkis & Mileur