

The Theory and Practice of Republican Government

Moral Reasoning 74

Core Course Syllabus

Spring Semester 2009

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Office hours (Wednesday 3-5 PM) and all student meetings: Center for American Political Studies (CAPS) Conference Room, Knafel K430.

Prologue: It was in a Fall 2002 conversation with Mathematics Professor Benedict Gross (later Dean of the College) about teaching political concepts that I heard him say: “I am surprised that many students here do not know what a republic is.” I wondered about that statement for the past few years, and in my own research on petitioning in the antebellum U.S. republic, I have come to think more about the republican character of our political institutions. This course is aimed at providing Harvard undergraduates with a better understanding of the concepts, theoretical basis and historical evolution of republican political forms.

Description: A theoretical and historical survey of the evolution of republican (representative) government in modern times, with a particular focus upon Anglo-American institutions. Our study will work back and forth between philosophical treatments of republican government and historical studies of monarchical republics, democratic republics, and anti-republican regimes (e.g., plebiscitary democracy). Questions include: How in some countries did republican government evolve generations (even centuries) before mass elections (voting by the unpropertied, for example). Did arguments for legislative supremacy prefigure the actual rise of parliamentary authority, and if so, how? What is the role of virtue in a republic, and in a democratic republic? Is it possible for representative institutions to promote such virtue while simultaneously empowering the people? How can republicanism ensure the “rule of the wise” without fostering autocratic power? What institutions besides elections keep the ruled in tune with the people? Finally, does the rise of plebiscitary institutions present a threat to republican institutions? What critique might republican theory advance of emerging “populist” arrangements in the United States and Latin America?

Required Texts

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* [Student Edition, Cambridge University Press]

Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (New York, Penguin, 1997).

Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1763-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962; new paperback version available).

Hamilton, Madison, Jay. *The Federalist Papers* (Clinton Rossiter edition).

Alexander Hamilton, *Writings*. [I acknowledge and apologize for the overlap with the *Federalist Papers* here, but the collection of scattered essays in this volume is quite good, even if it reproduces a number of the *Federalist* papers that you have elsewhere.]

Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Robert E. Wright, *One Nation Under Debt: Hamilton, Jefferson and the History of What We Owe* (McGraw-Hill, 2008)

The Sourcebook can be purchased on-line at: <http://www.hpps.harvard.edu/coursepacks>.

The Sourcebook will also be on reserve at Hilles and Lamont libraries.

Other texts in which you may be interested:

Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven, 2001).

Thomas Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (Chicago, 1987).

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Philosophy of Freedom and Government* (Cambridge).

Emmanuel Sieyès, *Political Writings*, ed. Michael Sonenscher (Hackett 2003)

Joel Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1828-1892* (Cornell University Press, 1994)

Course Work

3 papers during the semester [each 15% of grade], each of 4-6 pages, plus a final examination [15% of grade]. Strong expectation that reading will be completed, and that students will attend and participate in discussion sections [30-40%]. Occasional pop quizzes, as a way of enforcing lecture attendance [as much as 10 percent of the grade, to supplement other components additively.] We will explicitly factor in improvement in assigning final grades.

Readings and Course Schedule/Outline

Thursday, January 29th, 2009: Introduction

No required reading for this class. Lecture only.

Tuesday, Feb 3rd, 2009: What is a Republic? Arguments for the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution.

Declaration of Independence

Constitution of the United States

Federalist Nos 1-10, 23, 34, 39, 51.

A. The Roman Republic and the Machiavellian Model

Thursday, Feb 5th, 2009: The Roman Republic as a Model: Machiavelli's interpretation.

Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (OUP 1999) Chapters V and XII (pp 40- 65, 214-232). In sourcebook.

Machiavelli, *Discorsi*: Book I Chapters 1-4, 34-35; Book II, Chapters 1-3, 7-8.

We will discuss factual structure of Roman constitution and arrangements. Stress the significance of the framing and interpretation of Rome. Facts are less important than are their distillation, particularly by Machiavelli (through Polybius and Livy).

Optional readings on the Roman Republic, basis for Lecture:

Moses Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge U.P. 1983) pp. 50-96

E.S. Stavely, *Greek and Roman Voting and Elections* (Thames and Hudson 1972) pp 157-216

Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic in Political Thought* (Brandeis University Press 2002) pp 135-182.

Livy, *History of Rome*, Books I-X.

Polybius, *The Histories*, Volume III, Book VI (in Fragments), Sections 2 through 18.

Tuesday, Feb 10th, 2009: Machiavellian Republicanism and the Importance of a Mixed Regime. Liberty through Government, and the mixture of autocratic/tyrannical elements in republics. Religion, virtue and the dangers of corruption.

Machiavelli, *Discorsi*: Book I, Chapters 1-7, 9, 11-14, 24-30, 34-44.

Quentin Skinner, "The republican ideal of political liberty" in *Machiavelli and Republicanism* ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (CUP1990) pp 293-309. Sourcebook.

Thursday Feb 12th, 2009: Machiavellian Republicanism: On founding republics and maintaining them. How to contain the wealthy. The power and importance of the people/plebs, and the mutual constraint of "elite" and "mass." Superiority of republican arrangements to principalities. War and the Republic. Discuss Guicciardini's responses.

Machiavelli, *Discorsi*: Book I, Chapters 49-51, 53-55; Book II, Chapters 1-7, 15, 20, 22-23, 29-30; Book III, chapters 1-4, 8-9. [For topical relevance we are skipping NM's wonderful chapter on conspiracies, but it is worth a read.]

ASSIGNMENT: First Paper Due Monday, February 23 rd , 2009, at 8PM. ["Stamp" is electronic; 8:31:00 or later counts as late;]
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Optional readings on Machiavellian republicanism for those interested.

J.G.A. Pocock, "Virtues, rights and manners" in his *Virtue, Commerce and Industry* (CUP 1985), 30 pp.

Guicciardini's Reply to Machiavelli in *Considerations*, in *The Sweetness of Power: Machiavelli's Discourses and Guicciardini's Considerations*, James B. Atkinson and David Sices, eds. and trans. (DeKalb, 2002), pp. 381-438.

Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago).

John McCormick, selected essays on Machiavelli, from *Machiavellian Democracy* (forthcoming).

Optional Reading on the French Third Estate:

J. Russell Major, *The Deputies to the Estate General in Renaissance France* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press 1960) pp 3-22, 119-142.

Emmanuel Sieyès, "What is the Third Estate?" and the Sieyès-Paine debate of 1791, in Sieyès, *Political Writings* ed. Michael Sonenscher (Hackett 2003) pp. 92-173.

B. Modern Monarchical Republicanism: Early Modern England

Theoretical focuses of lectures and discussions: (1) the role played by monarchies in the creation and development of republican institutions, (2) the hybrid regime (mixed monarchical and democratic), (3) discussion of alternative legislative forms, (4) role of the petition as a representative mechanism for lower estates and other populations without franchise power, (5) role of social and political revolutions in expanding and undergirding new institutional forms and new liberties.

Tuesday, Feb 17th, 2009: The Co-Evolution of Monarchy and Representative Government

Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*. Chapter 5, “The Reign of Charles I, 1629-1637.” For background, skim Chapter 1 (“The Social World”) and Chapter 2 (“The Political World”).

Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Chapter 1, “The Divine Right of Kings”.

The Petition of Right (1628); on EEBO [Early English Books Online].

Charles I, *His Majesties Answer to the Nineteen Propositions of Both Houses of Parliament* (1641); on EEBO.

Aim: Quickly discuss Elizabethan arrangements, and move to note how divine right theory was a departure even from these. We will note some contradictions of Machiavelli here, notably that Elizabeth is a particularly powerful author of republican innovation and expansion.

Thursday Feb 19th, 2009: Early modern England: The Revolt against Absolute Monarchy

The Leveller Tracts (1647-53); on EEBO. Also in Haller and Davies, *The Leveller Tracts 1647-1653* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith). Following pagination is Haller and Davies.

- “A Declaration, or Representation” (pp. 51-63)
- “The Case of the Armie” (pp. 64-87)
- “An Agreement of the Free People of England” (pp. 318-328)

Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Chapter 3, “Inventing the Sovereign People.”

Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, Chapter 6 (“Rebellion and Civil War, 1637-1644”) and 7 (“Civil War and Revolution, 1645-1649”).

Tuesday, February 24th, 2009: Early modern England: Institutional re-emergence

Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Chapter 4, “The People’s Two Bodies.”

Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, Chapter 9, “The Restoration Settlements, 1659-1667.”

Thursday, February 26th, 2009: Early modern England: The philosophy of institutional form.

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 9-14, on EEBO.

James Harrington, *A System of Politics, The Commonwealth of Oceana*, “The Preliminaries, Showing Principles of Government” [essentially the first substantive chapter] on EEBO.

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2009: Early Modern England: the ascendance of Parliament.

Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Chapter 5, “A Cautious Revolution.”

Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, Chapter 10 (part) and Chapter 11, pp. 250-286.

Optional, but very interesting: David Zaret, “Petitions and the Creation of Public Opinion in the English Revolution,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 1497-1555. [J-STOR]

Thursday, March 5th, 2009: Montesquieu and the republican reading of the English constitution.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Part II, Books 11 and 12, esp. Book 11, Chapter 6, “On the constitution of England,” pp. 156-66.

C. The Theory and Practice of a Democratic Republic: Montesquieu, the American Revolution and the New Constitution

Theoretical focuses of lectures and discussions: (1) how constitutions undergird and inhibit republican government, (2) how do republics extend the franchise? (3) the return to strong(er) executive government (“the revolt against 1776”), (4) role of the petition as a representative mechanism for lower estates and other populations without franchise power, (5) civic institutions for keeping citizens well informed.

Tuesday, March 10th, 2009: Montesquieu on republican arrangements.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Books 1-3, 5, 7-8.

Thursday, March 12th, 2009: Montesquieu on governance, religion and lawmaking.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 13, 19-20, 24, 29.

ASSIGNMENT: Second Paper Due Monday, March 31 st , 2009, at 6PM.

Tuesday, March 17th, and Thursday, March 19th, 2009: The revolt against executive authority and the American Revolution.

Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Part 2, Chapters 7-9, and Chapter 10.

Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, Chapters 2-3, 5.

The Declaration of Independence

The Articles of Confederation

Tuesday, March 31st, 2009 and Thursday, April 2nd, 2009: The repudiation of 1776 and the forging of the American Constitution.

Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, Parts Four and Five.

Wright, *One Nation Under Debt*, Chapter 3.

The Federalist Papers; Nos 1-10 [Hamilton, Madison and Jay]; 15, 23, 34-35 [Hamilton]; 39, 45, 47-51 [Madison], 67-73, 78-80 [Hamilton].

The Anti-Federalist, selections from Web.

D. Republican Government in Practice: Contests over Practice, and Challenges to the Tradition

Tuesday, April 7th, 2009 and Thursday, April 9th, 2009: Slavery, Race and Republicanism

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, Chapter 11 and other selections. What is it to be free?

Historical reading of mass petitions on antislavery, from England and from U.S. [Instructor will provide primary sources.] This will amount to approximately 10-20 pages.

Daniel Carpenter, "The Petition as a Tool of Recruitment: Evidence from the Abolitionists' Congressional Campaign," manuscript, Harvard University.

Discuss the slavery/freedom dichotomy in light of the rise and cementation of wage labor in the United States. Discuss the Progressive vision of popular participation in legislation. Note differences from participatory vision of earlier periods.

Tuesday, April 14th, 2009 and Thursday, April 16th, 2009: Progressive, Corporate and Social Democratic Challenges to Republicanism

Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, Chapter 1-4, 9.

Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, Chapter 6-8.

ASSIGNMENT: Third Paper due Monday, April 20 th , 2009, at 3PM

Tuesday, April 21st, 2009 and Thursday, April 23rd, 2009: The Hamiltonian vision [liberty through strong government, commercial republic, strong executive] versus the Jeffersonian alternative [weaker executive, agrarian republic, decentralized government].

Lecture #1 on Hamiltonian v. Madisonian Political Economy: (Ab)using a Public Debt

- Hamilton, *Writings*, 531-574 (Report on the Public Credit)
- Wright, *One Nation Under Debt*, Chapter 5, "Alexander Hamilton's Grand Plan"
- Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, Chapter 5, "Economics and Virtue in the Early Republic"
- Jefferson, selections [online]
 - *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 16

- 1799 letter to Elbridge Gerry
- Madison, selections [online]: July 1791 letter to Thomas Jefferson

Lecture #2 on Hamiltonian v. Madisonian Political Economy: The National Bank Question

- Hamilton, *Writings*, 575-612 (Report on a National Bank)
- Wright, *One Nation Under Debt*, Chapter 4, "The Constitution and the National Debt" and re-skim pp. 147-160 of Chapter 5
- Jefferson, selections [online]
 - 1803 letter to Albert Gallatin
 - 1816 letter to John Taylor
- Madison, selection [online]: August 1791 letter to Thomas Jefferson

Federalist Nos. 11-13, 28-30, 35-6, 84-85.

Tuesday, April 28th, 2009 and Thursday, April 30th, 2009: Republican Visions of Government

Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, "Conclusion: In Search of a Public Philosophy."

Possibly essays by Jean Bethke Elshtain, Theda Skocpol, George Will, others.

Optional/Other Readings on Republican Government in the United States, Basis for Lecture:

Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor* (Yale).

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*.

Thomas Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (Chicago). Very useful critique of Wood, Pocock, and Skinner. Emphasis on Locke's contributions.

Joel Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1828-1892* (Cornell).

Edmund Morgan, *Creating the American Republic*.

Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford), chapter on free soil ideology (40 pages).

Robert Dahl, *The Anti-Democratic Character of the U.S. Constitution*.

Harvey Mansfield, *Taming the Prince*.