America was founded on the premise of providing freedom to its people. But what, exactly, is “freedom”? Is it doing what you want or is it participation in politics? Is it about escaping domination or does it require sharing power? These questions have been debated in America since the founding and continue today; this class will examine varied answers to these questions provided by American thought and popular culture. Analyzing political theory, public speeches, news articles and Hollywood film, we will explore how concepts of freedom and anxieties over freedom’s possibility take cultural form. While we may not settle the question of what freedom is or how to produce it, we will learn both to appreciate the complexity of freedom and to critically engage its operations in American public life.

The Learning Goals of this class are:

• To identify and interpret the varied concepts of “freedom” circulating in American culture and politics.
• To critically analyze how and why ideas of “freedom” are employed in public life.
• To evaluate an array of challenging cultural and political texts.
• To apply these analytic skills in the writing of sharp and concise essays about American politics and culture.

Books:

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*
Estelle Friedman, ed., *The Feminist Reader*
Lawler et. al, *American Political Rhetoric: Essential Speeches and Writings*
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
Henry Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*
Course readings on Blackboard under “electronic reserves” (readings starred)*

Statement on Citizenship:

My course expectations for this class are quite simple: attend class and be a good citizen. By “good citizen” I mean complete the readings before coming to class, be prepared to talk, be prepared to listen, and be curious. Some of the material we will be examining in the class is disturbing, contentious and/or violent. It is important to always be respectful of your peers’ reactions, engagements and criticisms. You should feel free to express your opinions but also be open to criticism of them. The classroom is a forum for inquiry and the exchange of ideas, regardless of how unpopular or disconcerting they may be. We will, in all likelihood, disagree with each other on various issues; the point of our discussions will be to learn from and debate with each other, and to do so with utmost respect, generosity and care.
Reading:
Books are on reserve at Gelman library. It is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments. Some of these texts are difficult and abstract; they will require slow and careful reading, even re-reading. You must set aside sufficient time for this – awake and alert time.

Screenings:
Screenings are mandatory unless you have a class or employee conflict. Screening dates are all in 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm (though they will usually end before 9) Tuesdays:
January 29
February 12
February 26
March 26
April 9
Mark the dates on your calendar. You may miss one without penalty, though you are required to watch the film on your time. All films are available for viewing in Gelman library and can be found in the reserve desk right when you walk in the library.

Writing:
Writing is an integral part of this course. Writing assignments are:
   a. four 1-page reviews of the reading
   b. one 3-4 page critical essay
   c. one 5-7 page critical essay
   d. one 6-8 page final critical essay.
   e. Revision of your 6-8 page essay.
All of the dates for the essays are marked on the syllabus. Writing assignments must be submitted by due date.

Grading:
Grading will be based on:
   a. seminar participation (10%)
   b. four 1-page papers (20%)
   b. 3-4 page essay (15%)
   c. 5-7 page essay (20%)
   d. 6-8 page paper plus revision (25% + 10% = 35%)

I have attached the rubric that will be used to grade your three longer essays and revision. Inconsistent attendance will be factored into the grade at the discretion of the TA.

Plagiarism:
In the writing assignments, unattributed use of the work of others—whether that of friends, esteemed scholars, or anonymous creatures on the web—will constitute failure in and ejection from the course. If you find yourself tempted, remember that the point of this class is to think about freedom, develop your capacities for theory and cultural analysis, hone your analytic skills, and deepen your understanding of political life. We are committed to rewarding your achievements in these domains and will not be looking for polished scholarly arguments.
I support GW’s code of academic integrity: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html
Disability:
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

SYLLABUS

Section I: Freedom’s Foundations in America

M Jan 14 • Introduction to the class
W Jan 16 • Common Sense pp.3-40
M Jan 21 MLK Day – no class
W Jan 23 • Common Sense pp.41-68
  • Declaration of Independence (American Political Rhetoric (APR) p. 1-4)
M Jan 28’ • Federalist Papers 9,10,39, 49,51, 57, 63 (in APR p11-19, 28-35, 43-47, 67-72 )
  • The Constitution (in APR p.327-347)
  • DUE: 1-page paper

T. Jan 29 SCREENING at 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm:
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (Dir: John Ford, 1962)

W Jan 30 • The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance

Section II: Freedom, Individualism, Disobedience

M Feb 4 • Tocqueville, “On The New England Township”*
  • Tocqueville, “The Social State of the Anglo-Americans” (in APR pp. 4-10)
  • Herbert Spencer, “The Right to Ignore the State”*
W Feb 6 • Tocqueville, “On Individualism”*
  • Thoreau, Civil Disobedience
M Feb 11 • Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience”*
  • Emma Goldman, “Anarchism”*
  • DUE: 1-page paper
T Feb. 12 SCREENING at 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm:
Born on the 4th of July (Dir: Oliver Stone, 1989)

W Feb 13
• Born on the 4th of July

M Feb 18
No CLASS: President’s Day
* 3-4 page ESSAY DUE

Essay #1: 3-4 Page Essay DUE MON, Feb. 18 via email to your TA

Section III: Freedom and Capitalism

W Feb 20
• Milton Freidman, Capitalism and Freedom, Intro, Ch. 1, Ch 2*

M Feb 25
• Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: Introduction, Chapter 1
• Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, Intro*

T. Feb 26 SCREENING at 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm:
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (Dir: Frank Capra, 1939)

W Feb 27
• Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

M Mar 4
• FDR “Commonwealth Club Address” (APR p.169-177)
• Nickel and Dimed: Chapters 2 and 4

Section IV: Freedom and its Exclusions: Race and Gender

W Mar 6
• The Constitution on Slavery (APR p.205-6)
• Fredrick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”*
• Frederick Douglass, “Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistment” (APR p.212)
• Frederick Douglass, “The Present and the Future of the Colored Race”*
• DUE: 1 Page Paper.

SPRING BREAK MAR 11-13

M Mar 18
• Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (APR p.219-228)
• Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union” (APR p.251-258)
W Mar 20  In The Feminist Reader:
• Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions”
• Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “The Solitude of Self”
• Betty Freidan, “The Feminine Mystique”

M Mar 25  • Peggy Orenstein, NYT, “What’s Wrong With Cinderella”*
• In The Feminist reader:
  • Susan Brownmiller “Against Rape”
  • Combahee Women’s Collective, “Black Feminist Statement”
  • Audre Lorde “The Master’s Tools”

T. Mar 26 SCREENING at 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm:
*Far From Heaven* (Dir: Todd Haynes, 2004)

W Mar 27  No CLASS: Research Day for next essay; you still have section.

M Apr. 1  • *Far from Heaven*
  • DUE: 5-7 Page paper

ESSAY #2, 5-7 pages – Due MON. Apr. 1 in class

Section V: Freedom and Power

W Apr. 3  • Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 1*

M Apr 8  • Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”**

Tues Apr 9 SCREENING at at 1957 E 113 from 7-9:30pm:
*Minority Report* (Dir: Steven Spielberg, 2002)

W Apr 10  • Michel Foucault, “The Eye of Power”**
  • Michel Foucault, “The Mesh of Power”**
  • *Minority Report*

M Apr 15  • Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?”**
  • 1-page paper DUE
Section VI: Freedom in Contemporary Politics: War, Economy, Discrimination

W Apr. 17  • G.W. Bush “Freedom at War With Fear”*
           • Timothy K. Osborn: “We are All Torturers Now: Accountability and Abu Ghraib”*

M Apr. 22:  • Mark Reinhardt, “Stuff White People Know, Or What We Talk About When We Talk About Trayvon Martin”*
           • Wendy Brown, “We Are All Democrats Now…”*

W Apr. 24  • Wendell Berry, “Faustian Economics”*
           • Robert McChesney, “The Political Economy of Media”*
           • 1-page paper DUE

M Apr. 29  • Tea Party Manifesto*
           • Joseph Stiglitz, “Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%”*
           • Vermont Succession Papers, 2008*

W May 1    • Conclusion and Wrap-Up
           • DUE: 6-8 page Paper

Essay #3 6-8 page paper  DUE May 1

6-8 page paper FINAL REVISION: DUE May 13
Grading Rubric for Essays

The Superior Paper (A/A-)
Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.
Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.
Analysis: Author clearly relates critical analysis evidence to thesis; analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think of the material.
Logic and argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Counterarguments are acknowledged and where possible refuted.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or awkward constructions.

The Good Paper (B+/B/B-)
Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.
Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.
Analysis: Critical analysis often related to thesis, though links perhaps not very clear.
Logic and argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have a couple of run-on sentences, sentence fragments, or other awkward constructions.

The "Need Help" Paper (C+/C/C-)
Thesis: May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.
Structure: Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.
Analysis: Points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes appear often without critical analysis relating them to thesis (or there is a weak thesis to support), or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote.
Logic and argumentation: Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments. May contain logical contradictions.
Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or fragments.

The Truly Needy Paper (D+/D/D-)
Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.
Structure: Unclear b/c thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.
Analysis: Very little or very weak attempt to relate analysis to evidence; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Little or no use of secondary sources.
Logic and argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Many logical contradictions, or simply too incoherent to determine.
Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

The Failing Paper
Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment.
Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis or the thesis is utterly incompetent.