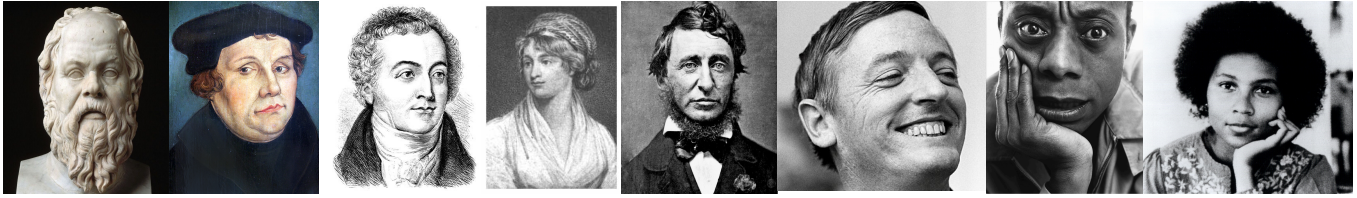


Syllabus – Linfield College - Political Science 313 – What is Freedom? (LC: UQ) – Fall 2015



Instructor: Nick Buccola --- **Class Meeting Time/Place:** Tuesday & Thursday, 12:55 to 2:25pm – Walker 305
Office: Walker 125 --- **Phone:** 503-883-2246 --- **E-Mail:** nbuccol@linfield.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:45 to 4:15pm / Thursday, 2:45 to 4:15pm and By Appointment

Course Description

Freedom is perhaps the most sought-after goal of revolutionaries and one of the ideas most ardently defended by political theorists. Across the philosophical and political spectrums, there seems to be agreement: freedom is a good thing that, if absent, ought to be pursued and, if present, ought to be defended. But what is freedom? Why do human beings want to be free? Should human beings be free? What sorts of political, economic, and social institutions are best suited to promote human freedom? What are the greatest obstacles to human freedom and can those obstacles be overcome? From the days of Socrates to the present, these questions have occupied great thinkers. In this course we will explore answers that great thinkers have given to these questions. In the process, I hope we will become better able to answer these questions for ourselves.

Contemporary political theorists have devoted a significant amount of time and energy to defining freedom. For some, freedom is best understood as the absence of interference with what one wishes to do. For others, freedom is best understood as the absence of domination. For still others, freedom cannot be properly understood without some attention to the end, or goal, one pursues with liberty. In order to gain a better sense of how freedom is best understood, we will embark on a far-reaching philosophical journey through some of the great books of the Western tradition. The core-reading list for this course provides us with opportunities to think about freedom through lenses provided by thinkers from a wide variety of historical epochs, cultural backgrounds, racial identities, gender identities, and philosophical perspectives. By engaging with such a variety of views on human freedom, I hope we will gain an appreciation for commonalities and tensions that exist between various philosophies of freedom. The authors we read will, furthermore, represent a wide variety of genres. We will read philosophers, essayists, journalists, novelists, and activists. We will be attentive to the different “ways of knowing” about freedom and I will encourage you to be attentive to how various modes of writing influence the sorts of questions an author considers and the sorts of evidence these authors consider to be compelling when answering those questions.

In Part I of the course, we will consider the relationship between freedom and heresy through the examination of three episodes from ancient and modern life: the trial and death of Socrates, Martin Luther’s protest against the Catholic church and his excommunication, and what the author Matthew Stewart calls the “heretical origins” of the American revolution. In Part II of the class, we will consider the ideas of two “rebels for freedom” through a close reading of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Henry David Thoreau’s classic defense of individuality in *Walden* and other writings. In Part III of the class, we will examine a conservative’s understanding of freedom in William F. Buckley’s *God and Man at Yale* and a radical’s reflections on freedom in James Baldwin’s *Notes of a Native Son* before concluding the semester with further consideration of feminist views of freedom in the works of bell hooks. Taken together, this core reading list will provide us with an intellectually and stylistically diverse set of perspectives on our enduring question. My hope is that through this diversity, we will gain an appreciation for what is compelling *and* what is problematic about the answers given by the authors we read.

NOTE: This course has been made possible through the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities “Enduring Questions” Program. The NEH Enduring Questions grant program supports faculty members in the preparation of a new course on a fundamental concern of human life as addressed by the humanities. These question-driven courses encourage undergraduates and teachers to join together in a deep and sustained program of reading in order to encounter influential ideas, works, and thinkers over the centuries.

Course Objectives (Linfield Curriculum Designation: UQ)

In this course, we will:

- be introduced to ultimate questions about freedom.
- ask questions about fundamental beliefs and competing truth claims about the concept of freedom.
- write and speak with clarity and coherence in response to ultimate questions about freedom.
- learn to engage in meaningful dialogue about the meaning of freedom.

NOTE: In order to earn a UQ for this course, you must complete the electronic submission of exemplar work and supporting descriptions by the last day of finals week, as discussed in the Linfield College Course Catalog.

Required Texts (Be sure to purchase the editions listed below. If you purchase different editions, it is *your* responsibility to be sure you are reading the appropriate pages prior to class). Do not purchase e-books!

FIRST BIT OF REQUIRED READING: THIS SYLLABUS & ALL EMAILS FROM INSTRUCTOR

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett)

Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian* (Hackett)

Matthew Stewart, *Nature’s God: The Heretical Origins of the American Revolution* (W.W. Norton)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Hackett)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (Modern Library)

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Penguin Random)

William F. Buckley Jr., *God and Man at Yale* (Perseus)

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From the Margin to the Center* (South End)

Blackboard Readings: additional readings will be made available on Blackboard. If you have questions about how to locate items on Blackboard, please check with a librarian.

Course Evaluation

PARTICIPATION: 15%

Most class sessions will consist of short lectures, large group discussions, and small group discussions. As such, it is essential that you attend class and that you are prepared to discuss the readings. This is a reading intensive class. Many of the readings are long and difficult. Give yourself plenty of time to complete, think about, and prepare to discuss the readings prior to class. Participation is often a deciding factor for borderline grades (e.g. A – or B + / C – or D).

Your participation grade will be calculated based on the following components:

- **Discussion Question Postings on Blackboard:** during the semester, you will be a “discussion leader” for three class sessions (sign up for one session during Part I of the class, one session during Part II, and one session during Part III). If you are a “discussion leader” you are required to post two thoughtful discussion questions on the class blackboard site by 8:00pm the night before class meets. In other words, if you are discussion leader for Thursday, September 3rd, you must have your questions posted on blackboard by 8:00pm on Wednesday, September 2nd. Your questions may be incorporated into class. Go to bblearn.linfield.edu > click on our class ([2015FA-POLS31301: WHAT IS FREEDOM?](#)) > on the

left side of the screen you will see “Discussions”, click on that > click on “Discussion Leaders” > post your discussion questions.

- **Participation in Discussion**: most class sessions will include small and large group discussions. It is imperative that you attend class and participate in these discussions. Failure to attend and participate will result in a low participation grade.
- **Reading Quizzes**: as extra incentive to keep up with the reading (just in case the awesomeness of the reading isn't incentive enough), I reserve the right to do pop reading quizzes.
- **Outside of Class Activities**: in addition to the participation components listed above, there will be several opportunities to attend events outside of class (Pizza & Politics events, PLACE lectures by visiting scholars, etc.) that can boost your participation grade in the class. There is one outside of class event REQUIRED – on Thursday, September 24th, our class will convene a bit earlier (at 11:45am in Riley 201) to hear a lecture by Matthew Stewart, who is the author of one of the books we will be reading. Make sure you clear that hour in your schedule so you are free to attend. In addition, there will probably be a required guest speaker on one of the themes of readings later in the semester. I will provide details on that lecture as soon as possible. Besides these required events, you should feel free to attend on campus lectures and events that you believe are related to the themes of the class. If you attend an event and you'd like to have it considered for extra participation credit, post a one-page response on our class blackboard page. In your response, describe what *you* think about what the speaker / speakers had to say at the event. Try to connect your response to course materials.

Exams: Two Essay Exams @ 25% Each = 50%

There will be two in-class essay exams in this course. The dates of those exams are listed below.

Final Essay = 30%

You will write a final essay for this class on topics from Part III of the class.

Debate & Freedom-Fest Performance: 5%

- **Debate Assignment**: all students are required to participate in an in-class debate. The sign-up sheet & instructions for debates will be distributed early in the semester. The quality of your debate performance will be factored into your final grade.
- **Freedom-Fest**: you will conclude the semester with a final paper presentation. This extravaganza of paper presentations will be known as “Freedom-Fest.”

Notes Regarding Evaluation

A Few Words on Manners: I wouldn't say it, but past experience tells me I must. Please behave. Arrive to class on time, pay attention, and be respectful of one another. **Leave your laptops, iPads, etc. at home and leave your cell phones out of sight.** Research indicates that the presence of electronics in the classroom detracts from your learning and the focus of those around you. I will try to give you a short break half way through class so we can minimize the disruptions of people getting up, leaving and coming back in the middle of class. Inappropriate behavior in class will result in a low participation grade.

Linfield Policy on Student Behavior: Every faculty member and student has the right to conditions favorable to teaching and learning both in and out of the classroom. To foster and maintain such conditions, students have the responsibility to conduct themselves individually and in groups in a manner that promotes an atmosphere conducive to teaching, studying, and learning. Students are expected to uphold academic and personal integrity, to respect the rights of others, to refrain from

disruptive, threatening, intimidating, or harassing behavior, or behavior that is harmful to themselves, other persons, or property. Each faculty member has the right and responsibility to foster an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

COURSE POLICY on CELL PHONES, etc.: due to an outbreak of in-class texting, I am instilling a draconian policy on cell phones in class. If I see you using your cell phone in class (please note I see everything & you won't get away with texting under the desk – why in the world would you spend so much time staring at your shoes?) you will receive an e-mail from me with the subject “Your Penance for Violating Universal Standards of Taste & Decency.” In the body of the e-mail, you will receive an assignment to write a 5-page essay on why using your cell phone in class is an affront to universal standards of taste & decency. Your failure to turn in this essay by the next class meeting will result in an automatic deduction of 5% from your participation grade. A second offense will result in an automatic deduction of 5% from your participation grade. If you have a special reason for staring at your cell phone during class time (e.g., you are waiting to hear news about the success of an operation on a close relative), please alert me before the start of class so we can discuss the merits of your case.

A Word on Grading: grades in the “A range” are earned for work that demonstrates a mastery of course material, grades in the “B range” are earned for work that demonstrates a good understanding of course material, grades in the “C range” are earned for work that demonstrates a basic understanding of course material, and grades in the “D & F range” for work that demonstrates you have an inadequate understanding of course material. My hope is that each of you will achieve excellence in this class. Also, please be patient when waiting for assignments to be returned. I put a lot of time and energy into grading in order to be sure everyone is treated fairly.

Late Papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day late (One day = B to B -). Extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

No Cheating: I "adhere to the college policy on academic honesty, as published in the Linfield College Course Catalog." Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Cheaters will be reported to the Dean.

Help Me Help You: Please feel free to seek **assistance** and feedback on the course materials from me, your classmates, and other college resources (the Writing Center).

Note Regarding Disabilities: Students with disabilities are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you are a student with a disability and feel you may require academic accommodations please contact Learning Support Services (LSS), as early as possible to request accommodation for your disability. The timeliness of your request will allow LSS to promptly arrange the details of your support. LSS is located in Melrose Hall 020 ([503-883-2562](tel:503-883-2562)). We also encourage students to communicate with faculty about their accommodations.

Course Schedule

Part I. Freedom & Heresy

Tuesday, September 1st: Introduction to the class, one another / Ways of thinking about Freedom
In-Class Reading: Pericles' Funeral Oration (distributed in class)

Thursday, September 3rd: Socrates' Defense of the Examined Life
Plato, “The Apology,” in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, September 8th: Socrates' Defense of the Examined Life & Death as a Kind of Liberation

Plato, "The Apology" - *The Trial and Death of Socrates* – Re-Read it

Plato, "Phaedo," excerpts on Blackboard

"Death Scene from Phaedo, in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, September 10th: The Freedom of a Christian – History & Personality

Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, Page 1-42

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, September 15th: The Freedom of a Christian – Theology

Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, Page 1-42 (Re-Read It)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, September 17th: The Freedom Revolutions of Modernity

Matthew Stewart, *Nature's God*, Preface (page 1-7), Page 68-74, Chapter 3 (77-129)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, September 22nd: Nature's God & Self-Evident Truths

Matthew Stewart, *Nature's God*, Chapter 4 (page 130-200) & Chapter 5 (201-262)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, September 24th: The Empire of Reason & the Religion of Freedom

Matthew Stewart, *Nature's God*, Chapter 7 (page 314-391) & Chapter 8 (page 392-435)

SPECIAL EVENT TODAY: CLASS WILL MEET AT 11:45AM IN RILEY 201 FOR A GUEST LECTURE BY MATTHEW STEWART (IN OBSERVANCE OF CONSTITUTION DAY) – LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT THIS EVENT. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE LECTURE AND Q&A, DR. STEWART WILL BE SHARING SOME OF HIS WISDOM ABOUT RESEARCH & WRITING. YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED.

Tuesday, September 29th: Debate #1 / Exam Review

IF NOT COMPLETED: Matthew Stewart, *Nature's God*, Chapter 7 (314-391) & Chapter 8 (page 392-435)

Read the study guide carefully and prepare to ask questions during the exam review.

Thursday, October 1st: Exam 1

Bring two pens and two bluebooks.

Part II. Rebels for Freedom

Tuesday, October 6th: The Freedom of Women

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Page 1-47 (Chapters 1-5)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, October 8th: The Freedom of Women

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Page 48-77 (Chapters 6-13)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, October 13th: Free Yourself from “Quiet Desperation”

Henry David Thoreau, “Economy,” in *Walden and Other Writings*, Page 1-75

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, October 15th: Free Yourself from “Quiet Desperation”

Henry David Thoreau, “Walking,” in *Walden and Other Writings*, Page 627-663

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, October 20th: Freedom & Social Responsibility

Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience,” in *Walden and Other Writings*, Page 665-694

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, October 22nd: Freedom & Social Responsibility

Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” in *Walden and Other Writings*, Page 715-744

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, October 27th: Debate #2 & In-Class Review Session

Read the study guide carefully and prepare questions to ask during the review session.

Thursday, October 29th: Exam 2

No reading

Part III. Conservative & Radical Conceptions of Freedom

Tuesday, November 3rd: Conserving Freedom

William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*, Chapters 1, 2, & 3 (page 3-122) – don’t worry, it’s large print!

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, November 5th: Conserving Freedom

William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*, Chapters 4, 5, & 6 (page 123-177)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, November 10th: Rethinking Freedom

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, “Autobiographical Notes,” (page 3-13); “Many Thousands Gone” (page 24-45); “The Harlem Ghetto (page 57-72)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, November 12th: Rethinking Freedom

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, “Notes of a Native Son,” (page 85-116); “Stranger in the Village” (page 159-end)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Tuesday, November 17th: Freedom & Intersectionality

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From the Margin to the Center*, Chapters 1 through 6 (page 1-95)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Thursday, November 19th: Freedom & Intersectionality

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From the Margin to the Center*, Chapters 1 through 6 (page 96-166)

Discussion Leaders: _____

Week of November 23rd: Thanksgiving Break

Part IV. Are We Free?

Tuesday, December 1st: In-Class Screening of Buckley-Baldwin Debate & Discussion

Read transcript of Baldwin-Buckley Debate, on Blackboard

Thursday, December 3rd: Debate #4 & Paper Workshop

Outlines of other writers in your peer review group

Tuesday, December 8th: Freedom-Fest – Final Paper Presentations

Final papers of others on your panel.

Thursday, December 10th: Freedom-Fest – Final Paper Presentations

Final papers of others on your panel.

Week of December 14th - Finals Week