

POLITICAL SCIENCE 318**THE AMERICAN FARM**

Spring 2001

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This course will explore the American agrarian tradition from the founding to the present, examining the historical, economic, ecological, and political context in which ideas about farming and farm life have evolved. We will also consider the historical relationship between agrarianism and related and opposing ideologies, such as Populism, liberalism, environmentalism and feminism, and consider its contemporary relevance and vitality.

GOALS:

1. To develop a working definition of American agrarianism;
2. To critically evaluate agrarianism, drawing on the insights of sociologists, historians, economists, and political scientists;
3. To evaluate the continuing usefulness of agrarianism as a political ideology.

Course requirements:

- Your grade will be based on participation and a research paper, at least 20 pages in length, engaging the themes discussed in this course.
- In addition, each student will write a short (3-5 pp.) paper on the readings for one class session, and give a short (10 min.) presentation on the readings to the class. The paper may be rewritten as often as the student wishes, for a new grade.

Your grade will be calculated as follows, more or less. I may modify the weight of the assignments slightly to achieve a more accurate reflection of the student's performance in the class:

Short paper:	10%
Presentation:	10%
Research paper:	
First draft:	15%
Final draft:	40%
Participation:	25%

Readings:

Taylor, *Arator*
 Washington, *Up From Slavery*
 Berry, *Unsettling of America*
 Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*

*Other readings are on reserve

RESEARCH PAPER

We're going to write an encyclopedia article on Agraria, a utopian country that has an ideal system of agriculture. Each student will choose one subject to write about: Agraria's economics, politics and government, history, agriculture and industry, society and culture, literature and the arts, geology and environment, etc. More than one student can work on a subject, but they should divide up the responsibility and write separate papers.

Although students will write their papers independently, you will have to reach a consensus on Agraria's basic features so that you don't contradict each other. For example, if Agraria has an industrialized agriculture, the paper on geology and environment should reflect that and discuss the environmental impacts of such an agriculture.

WORKSHOPS:

Throughout the term, we'll have periodic class discussions of Agraria, beginning with a workshop in the second week.

For the first workshop, each student will propose a general description of Agraria; we'll review these proposals and reach a consensus on Agraria's basic social, natural and historical features.

Each subsequent workshop will be devoted to one aspect of Agraria. The student working on that subject will present his/her paper and receive critical feedback. **The student will then have one week to incorporate that feedback and submit a first draft.** Students should also expect to meet outside of class from time to time, or work out issues concerning Agraria via e-mail.

THE PAPER:

Each paper should be 15-20 pp. in length (and no more than 20 pp!) It will take the form of an analytic encyclopedia article - in other words, you will both describe and explain Agraria, drawing on the relevant theoretical literature and drawing comparisons to America when useful.

I expect students to do a significant amount of library research. The paper should be documented and include a bibliography. (Feel free to add imaginary sources, but be sure to use real ones as well!)

TIPS ON PRESENTATIONS

- What should I talk about?

Like a good essay, a good oral presentation should help us better understand the text and highlight important and interesting points. **It should not simply summarize the readings!** For example, a presentation may focus on clarifying a complex argument in the text, relating the text to other readings or class discussion, or critiquing the author's reasoning.

- How should I structure the presentation?

Like a good essay, **a good presentation needs an introduction and a conclusion.** In a short presentation, these will be quite brief, but the introduction should tell us what you're going to talk about and the conclusion should highlight the key points you want us to remember.

The body of the presentation should also have a clear structure. You will probably want to limit yourself to 3 or 4 ideas: make the point, explain why it's interesting and give some support.

Example:

Point: The main difference between Taylor and Hamilton is that Hamilton cares about making the nation economically and politically powerful, while Taylor is worried about preserving the conditions for republican government.

Explanation: Hamilton wants to encourage trade because he thinks commerce creates wealth - unlike the physiocrats, he doesn't think agriculture is the foundation of national wealth. Taylor cares about wealth too, but he's concerned about increasing the wealth of farmers, in order to increase their political power and prevent the commercial interests from corrupting the government. Hamilton doesn't worry about the political effects of commerce (if anything, he thinks the commercial interests are the best suited to rule).

Support: cite the relevant quotes.

- What else makes a presentation effective?

Preparation: It's a truism among professors that to give a good lecture you have to know about 3 times as much material as you actually present. Spend time analyzing the text: make an outline of the structure of the argument; consider how well the argument is supported; try to come up with counterarguments and anticipate how the author would answer them. You won't include most of this in your presentation - but your superior command of the material will be evident in the quality and confidence of the presentation.

Public speaking skills: practice your delivery. Make sure you know your material well enough that you don't have to read it. You should make eye contact with the audience frequently. **You are required to practice your presentation at least once with a tutor at the Speakeasy. Plan ahead and make an appointment!*

Visual aids: It's always helpful for the audience to have something to look at: an outline of the presentation written on the board or on a hand-out, a copy of key quotes, a diagram that illuminates some difficult concept, or a picture that illustrates a point.

Invite questions at the end. You're the expert on that text for the day; you should attempt to demonstrate that you have spent some time chewing over the text and you understand it pretty well. (Note: after asking for questions, count to yourself slowly to 20. It takes most students at least that long to formulate a question.)

Course Outline

I. FOUNDINGS: 1780-1870

Mar 27: America and the Yeoman Farmer

Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, Query XIX

Letter to Jay (Aug. 23, 1785)

Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, pp. 66-73, 90-105

Danbom, Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America, *Ag. Hist.* 65(Fall 1991): 1-12)

*Evening session: Straight Story

Mar 29: Agrarian Economics

Paine, *Agrarian Justice*

Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, pp. 45-60

Montmarquet, Agrarianism, Wealth, and Economics, **Ag. & Human Values** (Spr/Su 1987): 47-52

April 3: Farmers vs Nonfarmers I

Hamilton, *Report on Manufactures* (selections)

Taylor, *Arator*, nos. 1-15, 59, 60, 64

April 5: Farmers vs "Nonfarmers" II

Worcester v Georgia (selections)

Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, Ch. 3, 4

Homestead Act of 1862 (from Commager, *Documents of American History*)

*First Workshop: prepare general description of Agraria (for oral presentation)

II. THE POPULISTS, 1870-1920

April 10: Populists on Industrialization

In Pollack, *The Populist Mind*:

Omaha Platform (1892) (pp. 59-66)

Weaver, "A Call to Action" (pp. 109-169)

Garland, *Main-Travelled Roads*, pp. 69-129 ("Up the Coolly")

Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, pp. 276-289

April 12: Populists on Race

In Pollack, *The Populist Mind*:

Watson, "The Negro Question in the South" (pp. 360-374)

Washington, *Up From Slavery*, through Ch. 9

*Second Workshop

April 17: Washington, *Up From Slavery*, Ch, 10 - end

*Third Workshop

April 19: Women and Farming

In Haney & Knowles, *Women and Farming*:

Haney & Knowles, "Introduction" (pp. 1-12)

Fink, "Sidelines and Moral Capital" (pp. 55-70)

Knowles, "It's Our Turn Now" (pp. 303-318)

Miller & Neth, "Farm Women in the Political Arena" (pp. 357-380)

*Fourth Workshop

III. COUNTRY LIFE: 1900-1930

April 24: The Country Life Movement

Bailey, *The Country Life Movement*, pp. 1-3, 14-30, 55-60, 85-96, 178-200

In McGovern, *Agricultural Thought in the Twentieth Century*:

Roosevelt, "Greatness Depends on the Tiller of the Soil" (pp. 25-34)

In Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand*:

"Introduction: Statement of Principles"

Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate"

*Fifth Workshop

IV. THE DECLINE OF AGRARIAN DEMOCRACY: 1930-1970

April 26: Modernization of Agriculture

McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, Intro, Ch. 4-6, 8, 17

In Comstock, *Is There A Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm*:

Kirkendall, "A History of the Family Farm" (pp. 79-97)

Barlett, *American Dreams, Rural Realities*, Ch. 2

*Sixth Workshop

May 1: Agriculture and the New Deal

In McGovern, *Agricultural Thought in the Twentieth Century*:

"Soil Erosion-The Problem of the Great Plains" (pp. 216-228)

Wallace, "For A Domestic Ever-Normal Granary" (pp. 228-239)

Tolley, "A Defense of Democratic Planning" (pp. 239-256)

Lilienthal, "TVA Transforms a Region" (pp. 264-281)

Orden, Parrlberg & Roe, *Policy Reform in American Agriculture*, Ch. 1

*Seventh Workshop

May 3: Modern Agricultural Economics

In McGovern, *Agricultural Thought in the Twentieth Century*:

Benson, "Minimum Controls and a Free Market" (pp. 411-437)

Galbraith, "A Thrust at Sonorous Boondoggling" (pp. 437-453)

In Comstock, *Is There A Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm*:

Easterbrook, "Making Sense of Agriculture" (pp. 3-39)

Responses to Easterbrook (pp. 31-40)

*Eight Workshop

May 8: Modern Farm Politics

Hansen, *Gaining Access*, Ch. 3, 5Browne, *Private Interests, Public Policy, and American Agriculture*, Ch. 2Lewis-Beck, "Agrarian Political Behavior in the United States," *AJPS* 21 (Aug. 1977): 543-565)

*Ninth Workshop

V. THE GREENING OF AMERICAN AGRARIANISM: 1970 - 2001

May 10: Ecological Agrarianism

Berry, *Unsettling of America*, Preface - Ch. 5

*Tenth Workshop

May 15: Cont.

Berry, *Unsettling of America*, Ch. 6-Ch. 7

*Eleventh Workshop

May 17: Cont.

Berry, *Unsettling of America*, Ch. 8- endIn Comstock, *Is There A Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm:*

Tweeten, "Food for People and Profit" (pp. 246-262)

*Twelfth Workshop

May 22: A Feminist Perspective

In Haney & Knowles, *Women and Farming:*

Elbert, "Women & Farming" (pp. 245-264)

Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*, through Ch. 23

*Thirteenth Workshop

May 24: Cont.

Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*, Ch. 24- end

*Evening session: A Farmer's Wife

May 29: 1996 Freedom to Farm Act (summary)

Final papers due: Friday, June 1, noon