**CURRENT ISSUES IN AMERICAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY**

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**Course description**

The course will take the form of a reading seminar, dealing with current issues mainly in American politics, but also relating to broader trends in society, culture, and the economy. The topics to be discussed will include: democracy and constitutionalism; historical consciousness; race relations; the state of the working class; political ideologies (liberalism, conservatism, left- and right-wing populism); the effects of technological innovation; the changing role of women; same-sex marriage; religious exceptionalism; political correctness; and the U.S.’s future as a global superpower. Classes are designed to be highly interactive, with students presenting and debating the various issues based on the assigned readings and their own research.

**Required and recommended readings will include:**

Alexis de Tocqueville: *Democracy in America.* Edited by J. P. Mayer. Perennial Classics, 2000.

Robert Dahl: *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2001.

Ron Chernow: *Alexander Hamilton.* The Penguin Press, New York, 2004.

Joan C. Williams: What So Many People Don’t Get About the U.S. Working Class. *Harvard Business Review*, November 10, 2016. <https://hbr.org/2016/11/what-so-many-people-dont-get-about-the-u-s-working-class>

J.D. Vance: *Hillbilly Elegy. Memoir of a Culture in Crisis.* HarperCollins, 2016.

Ta-Nehisi Coates: The First White President. *The Atlantic*, October 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/>

Richard Rorty: *Achieving Our Country. Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America.* Harvard University Press, 1998.

Mark Lilla: *The Once and Future Liberal. After Identity Politics.* HarperCollins, 2017.

Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos: An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right. *Breitbart News*, March 29, 2016. <http://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/>

The Future of Work. *The New York Times Magazine*, February 26, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/issue/magazine/2017/02/24/magazine-index-20170226>

Hanna Rosin: The End of Men. *The Atlantic*, July/August 2010. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-end-of-men/308135/>

Anne-Marie Slaughter: Why Women Still Can’t Have It All? *The Atlantic*, July/August 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>

*Obergefell v. Hodges.* U.S. Supreme Court case. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/14-556>

Landon Schnabel and Sean Bock: The Persistent and Exceptional Intensity of American Religion: A Response to Recent Research. *Sociological Science*, November 27, 2017. <https://www.sociologicalscience.com/articles-v4-28-686/>

Allan Bloom: *The Closing of the American Mind.* Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987.

Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt: The Coddling of the American Mind. *The Atlantic.* September 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

William Deresiewicz: On Political Correctness. Power, Class and the New Campus Religion. *The American Scholar*, Spring, 2017. <https://theamericanscholar.org/on-political-correctness/>

Joseph Joffe: *The Myth of America’s Decline. Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies.* W.W. Norton & Co., 2014.

**Assessment**

Assessment will be based on class presentations, participation in class discussions and a final essay on a freely chosen topic related to the issues discussed during the semester.