

Liberty, Power, and Citizenship

Description

Using Gordon S. Wood's book, *Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution* as a guide, we will explore the fundamental concepts behind the United States Constitution, from its composition to the present. We will examine how the definitions of key concepts, such as liberty and citizenship shaped US institutions and shifted power dynamics, from the American Revolution to today, focusing in particular on the consequences of changing conceptions of agency. From debates about federalism vs. local government, to contests over who gets to participate in the political process and how, we will reflect on how we should think about constitutional principles as living and evolving guidelines for the preservation of meaningful political freedom. As we do so, we will also reflect on how to incorporate these questions and materials into the middle- and high-school curriculum.

Objectives

- Understand the concept of freedom in relation to law
- Understand the concept of the citizen and the role of citizens
- Understand inclusion into and exclusion from the body politic
- Consider the status of sources, such as the US Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, and the Seneca Falls Declaration, and how that status affects current political debates
- Consider how to incorporate these concepts into the civic education curriculum
- Examine effective ways in which teachers and students can work with primary sources and apply them to contemporary problems, such as: inclusion and exclusion; equality; social movements; protest; voter suppression.

Assessment/Evaluation/Grading

- Participation in seminar discussions will be a vital component of the course (30%).
- A 2-page proposal for the final project, due at the end of the first week, in which participants explain the curricular goal to be achieved and give a preliminary account of how that will be done in the final project. We will review these and discuss ways of improving them (20%).
- We will conclude each of our meetings with a discussion about how to incorporate the topics and materials we examined into the middle- and high-school curriculum. Teams of two-three participants will open this part of the discussion with a short presentation of their experiences and ideas in this area (20%).
- A final draft of a lesson plan that addresses concepts covered in the course and reflections on working with primary sources, due one week after the completion of the course (30%).

Expectations

For each session, the course participants will be expected to come prepared to discuss a set of reading completed in advance. We will also use an online tool, such as Perusall or Canvas, to comment on the texts and raise questions for discussion. Participants will be expected to contribute to discussions and to complete the proposal and final project described above, in a timely manner.

Readings

Please see the schedule, below. These will be made available in hard copy before the beginning of the course and on the course's Canvas site.

Accessibility Statement

Academic Support at the StAAR Center:

The StAAR Center (formerly the Academic Resource Center and Student Accessibility Services) offers a variety of resources to all students (both undergraduate and graduate) in the Schools of Arts and Science, Engineering, the SMFA and Fletcher; services are free to all enrolled students. Students may make an appointment to work on any writing-related project or assignment, attend subject tutoring in a variety of disciplines, or meet with an academic coach to hone fundamental academic skills like time management or overcoming procrastination. Students can make an appointment for any of these services by visiting go.tufts.edu/TutorFinder, or by [visiting our website](https://students.tufts.edu/staar-center) (<https://students.tufts.edu/staar-center>).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

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Student Accessibility Services: <https://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services>

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Please consult Tufts' academic integrity policy: <https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>

Academic Resource Center

<https://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center>

Schedule

1. What is a Freedom?
Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, selections
King, *Stride toward Freedom*, selections
2. What is a Source?
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Introduction
Paine, *Common Sense*, selections
Federalist 51
3. What is a Constitution? - 1
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Chs. 1-2
Declaration of Independence
Allen, *Our Declaration*, selections
4. What is a Constitution? - 2
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Chs. 3-5
Allen, *Our Declaration*, selections
5. Who is (and is not) a Citizen? - 1
Sojourner Truth, *Narrative*, exc.
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, exc.
King, Letter from a Birmingham City Jail
6. Slavery and Race
Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Ch. 5
The Founders' Constitution, selections
7. Gender and Power
Declaration of Sentiments
Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House."
The Founders' Constitution, selections
8. The Courts and the Law
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Ch. 6
From Plessy v. Ferguson to Brown v. Board of Education, selections.
The Founders' Constitution, selections
9. The Public and the Private
Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Ch. 7
The Founders' Constitution, selections

10. Constitutionalism in the Classroom

Wood, *Power and Liberty*, Epilogue

Westheimer & Kahne, "Educating the 'Good Citizen:!' Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals"

Educating for American Democracy: A Roadmap to Transform K-12 Civics