

AMERICAN POLITICAL THEORY II: THE LINCOLN/DOUGLAS DEBATES

Graduate Program
Fall 2005

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the theory, politics, and statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in the years leading up to the American Civil War. The study of Lincoln and Douglas is prefaced by an examination of the exchange between Socrates and Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*. These texts raise the fundamental questions of political philosophy, American politics, democratic theory, and statesmanship. They prod us to consider the relationship between moral principle and practical politics, between majority rule and minority rights, between justice and expediency. The readings and class discussions are also designed to encourage you to think about your own political and ethical views and about the meaning and importance of politics in human life.

II. READINGS

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait Through His Speeches and Writings*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964.
Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 195 .
Robert W. Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
Plato, *The Republic*, ed. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
William Safire, *Freedom*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1987.

Recommended Readings:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850s*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962.

III. CLASS PREPARATION AND CONTRIBUTION

This class includes a hefty amount of in-class discussion and debate. You are asked to make a significant and meaningful contribution to these class discussions. In order to accomplish this, you need to *attend the classes, complete the reading for each class, and spend time thinking about the issues raised in the texts and class conversations*. I ask you to take this responsibility with the utmost seriousness, for your own progress of learning as well as the quality of the class will largely depend on the extent to which you do this.

IV. PAPER

A paper (approximately 20 pages) is due towards the end of the semester (see Schedule). This paper may be based on one of the topic questions listed in the schedule. If you would like to choose another topic, please talk with me about your idea and have it approved at least a month prior to the end of the semester.

NOTE: Make and keep both a disk and a hard copy of your papers before submitting them. Also, be sure you have read and understand the university policy on plagiarism. See the university booklet, *Learning with Integrity*. Plagiarism results in an automatic AF@ in this course.

V. EXAMINATIONS

A. In-class Oral Examinations and Debates: Each of you will be called upon during the semester to provide a response to one of the topic questions listed in the schedule for that week, or the previous week. (You may be called upon multiple times.) To prepare yourself for these, you should do the assigned readings and think through the question and your response prior to class. The question you are asked may require a debate response.

B. Midterm and Final Examinations: There will be a final examination in this course. The final will be comprehensive and may include questions on assigned readings, assigned class handouts, lectures, and class discussions. It may be a written and/or oral examination.

VI. GRADING FOR THIS COURSE

Grading in this course is based on your class preparation, class contribution, in-class oral examinations, paper, midterm examination, and final examination.

Class Contribution and In-Class Oral Examinations:	25%
Paper:	50%
Final Examination:	25%

VII. SCHEDULE

NB: Safire's *Freedom* is a large tome; you should begin reading it as soon as possible and continue reading it throughout the semester in order to have it finished by Week 14.

TQ = Topic Questions

WEEKS 1, 2, & 3: 8/29

Introduction

Republic, Book 1

- TQ: 1) How is the issue of power v. persuasion presented in Book 1?
2) Why is the issue of power v. persuasion considered a fundamental question in politics? And what does the issue have to do with the question of justice? **THINK**.
3) Explain and analyze Thrasymachus' argument.
4) Is justice the right of the stronger? Prepare Pro and Con.

WEEK 4: 9/12

Republic, Books 2 and 8

- TQ: 1) Explain and analyze Adeimantus' passions/ambitions.
2) Explain and analyze Glaucon's passions/ambitions.
3) Explain the cycle of regimes discussed in Book 8.
4) What are the central strengths of democratic government?
5) What are the central weaknesses of democratic government?
6) Is democratic government good government? Prepare Pro and Con.

WEEK 5: 9/19

L/D, 16 June 1858 Speech by Lincoln

L/D, 9 July 1858 Chicago Speech by Douglas

L/D, First Joint Debate

- TQ: 1) Explain and defend Douglas' concept of popular sovereignty.
2) Explain Douglas' idea that uniformity is the parent of despotism.
3) Explain and defend Douglas' criticism of Lincoln's stated position on the Dred Scott decision.
4) Present a clear summary of the Kansas-Nebraska (K-N) Act.

WEEK 6: 9/26

L/D, First and Third Joint Debates

Crisis, Introduction and chs. I-IV

- TQ: 1) Present a clear summary of Douglas' position on the K-N Act.
2) Present a clear summary of Douglas' position on the Lecompton Constitution.
3) Defend Douglas' opposition to the Chase Amendment.
4) Explain and defend Douglas' view that Lincoln's principles and policy will destroy the Union.
5) Why did Douglas think that there was no way to destroy slavery under the Constitution?
6) Was Douglas correct about this?

WEEK 7: 10/3

L/D, Fifth and Seventh Joint Debates

W 10/2: *Crisis*, chs. V-VIII

- TQ: 1) Explain and defend Douglas' vision of how to put slavery in the course of ultimate extinction and save the Union.
2) Offer a well reasoned argument defending Douglas' repeal of the Missouri Compromise.
3) Do you agree with Douglas' solution regarding how to get rid of slavery in the United States? Defend your position.

FALL BREAK

WEEK 8: 10/17

Lyceum Address

Crisis, ch. IX

Documentary Portrait, Nos. 1, 4

- TQ: 1) Describe and explain Lincoln's portrait of the "towering genius"
2) Analyze Glaucon's character within the context of Lincoln's description of the Atowering genius@.

WEEK 9: 10/24

Lyceum Address and Temperance Address

Crisis, ch. X

Documentary Portrait, Nos. 7, 11

- TQ: 1) What (if any) is the difference between the shepherd and the wolf?
2) Explain the idea of temperance/moderation presented in the Temperance Address.

WEEK 10: 10/31

Peoria Speech

Crisis, chs. XI-XIII

Documentary Portrait, Nos. 20

- TQ: 1) Defend Douglas' support of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.
2) Defend Lincoln's opposition to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.
3) What is the difference and what is the relationship between Lincoln's understanding of the legal and political tendency toward slavery?

WEEK 11: 11/7

Lincoln's Speech on the Dred Scott Decision

Crisis, chs. XIV-XV

Documentary Portrait, Nos. 19, 25, 26, 32

- TQ: 1) Explain and defend the contemporary idea of toleration.
2) Critique the contemporary idea of toleration within the context of the following passage from *Crisis* (p. 334, 336):
"According to Lincoln, a free people cannot disagree on the relative merits of freedom and despotism without ceasing, to the extent of the difference, to be a free people....The commitment to freedom must simultaneously be a commitment to justice, and the idea of a freedom to be unjust would imply, by equal reason, a freedom to be unfree.@
3) What is a "standard maxim" (i.e., that Lincoln speaks of in the Dred Scott Decision Speech)?

WEEK 12: 11/14

Crisis. chs. XVI-XVII

Documentary Portrait, No. 33, 29

- TQ: 1) Explain Lincoln's understanding of the meaning of equality.
2) Are all men created equal? Prepare Pro and Con.

WEEK 13: 11/21

PAPER DRAFT DUE. Class devoted to Working Session on papers. You should come

prepared with any questions you may have on the substance of your paper, mechanics of writing, etc.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 14: 11/28

Crisis, chs. XVIII-XX

Documentary Portrait, Nos. 60, 68, 87, 92, 105

Safire, *Freedom*

TQ: When Lincoln “freed the slaves” in the Emancipation Proclamation, he did not free all the slaves, but only those in states which had succeeded from the Union. Should he have freed *all* the slaves?

WEEK 15: 12/5

Safire, *Freedom*

TQ: What did Lincoln mean by his professed primary devotion to “saving the Union”? Is his legal and moral position defensible?

PAPER DUE.

WEEK 16: 12/12

Summary Review

This class may be rescheduled.

FINAL EXAM: TBA