In this class, we will canvas and critically reflect on the political thought that shaped the political understandings of post-World War II American conservative movement. We will consider, amongst other things, foundational understandings concerning God, place, and the state, alongside areas to which they have been applied in U.S. political life, including economics, race, and a selection of contemporary public policies.

Office Hours: Office hours -- both in person, in my office, and via Zoom -- will be by appointment. You should email me -- best -- or otherwise speak to me to set up a time to talk.

Class Meetings/Attendance: This class will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, X-X. Except in cases of illness or other important life issue, students are expected to attend all classes (for Covid or disability issues affecting attendance, please make arrangements through the disability office (information below) or the Dean’s office). The class will be part lecture and part discussion. Students are expected to attend all classes, to do all assigned readings prior to class, and to be ready to discuss the readings and the questions they raise during our class meetings. I reserve the right to call on any student in class at any time.

Restrictions on Computers in Class: To minimize distractions, students are prohibited from using any type of computer or phone into class that is active/turned on (this means laptops, notebooks, smartphones, etc.) for any purpose other than bringing up assigned readings on the screen. Student may not browse the internet, engage in social media, chat, or use their computer for any other purpose than accessing course texts. These restrictions, and this rule, are mandatory. Exceptions will be made in individual cases for legitimate, dean-approved reasons, including disability (information below) and covid-related issues cleared through the Dean’s or the disability office.

Canvas: We will make use of the course Canvas page. Most significantly, most of the readings in this class are posted on the course Canvas page: you will find any reading in the class listed that is not in a required-for-purchase book posted in the Modules section of the course Canvas page.

Teaching Assistant: X will be the Teaching Assistant for the course. His role in this particular class, however, will involve light, mostly administrative, assistance with a selection of course tasks. I will be personally grading the assignments, including papers and quizzes.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act committed in an academic context, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism (attempting to pass the work
of others off as your own, in any way in any part of an assignment), and submitting for credit in this class work done for another class.

The University’s policy on Academic Integrity may be found at www.bc.edu/integrity. Ask me if you have any questions about academic integrity; the Political Science Department also offers a quiz and discussion at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz.html.

All suspected violations will be reported to the Dean in accordance with University policy. A final grade of “F” for the course will be given in the event of a violation of academic integrity."

**Disability Accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD. For other students with medical, physical, psychological, and temporary disabilities should register with the Disability Services Office. Go to the following link for more details to register: https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/student-outreach-and-support-services/disability-services.html

**ESL Assistance:** Boston College welcomes students from around the world and recognizes the unique perspectives international students bring enrich the campus community. To empower students whose first language is not English, Boston Colleges makes ESL specific resources available on campus, including ESL writing support and conversation appointments through the Connors Family Learning Center. A curated list of web resources is also available through the CFLC website.

**Required Books:**

Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (University of Chicago, 1948/1984)  
Thomas Sowell, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* (William Morrow, 1984)  
Thomas Sowell, *The Quest for Cosmic Justice* (Touchstone, 1999)

**Course Requirements:** Two Quizzes (30%); Two (2) Papers (50%); Class Attendance/Participation/Ungraded Exercises (20%).

All grades will be calculated by me, on a private Excel sheet -- and not using (idiosyncratic) numbers auto-generated by Canvas, or any other calculating system.
Conservatism in Modern America

WEEK ONE

Introduction -- Taxonomy, Development, and Current Events

**TOPICS:** Where does conservatism fit within broader currents of American political thought -- such as liberalism, republicanism, nationalism (including racial/ethnic forms of nationalism)? Is American conservatism an identity-based movement? Is it an ideas/philosophy/principles-based movement? A temperament-based movement? Is conservatism a consistent perspective, or does it change with time, politics, and the nature of its targets/opposition/enemies?

Ken I. Kersch, *American Political Thought: An Invitation* - Ch. 1 (Themes and Frameworks in American Political Thought)


Timothy Lombardo, “What are White Workers Thinking?” *Hardcrackers* (June 2020)


WEEK TWO -- The Conservative Mind

**TOPICS:** Conservatism as a rejection of liberalism, modernity, modern liberalism. Burkean conservatism; conservatism as ideas v. conservatism as temperament; How American is conservatism? Would an American conservatism be different from conservatisms elsewhere?

Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948):
   Ch. 1: The Unsentimental Sentiment
   Ch. 2: Distinction and Hierarchy
   Ch. 3: Fragmentation and Obsession

   Ch. 1: The Idea of Conservatism
   Ch. 2: [Edmund] Burke and the Politics of Prescription


Willmoore Kendall, “What is Conservatism?” (1963)
WEEK THREE -- Individualist Liberalism

**TOPICS:** How much is American conservatism simply a strong version of liberal political thought?

William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883)

Herbert Hoover, “Rugged Individualism” (1928)

Ayn Rand, “John Galt’s Speech” (from *Atlas Shrugged*) (1957)
Ayn Rand, interviewed by Mike Wallace (1959)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJyShzXob8I

Whittaker Chambers “Big Sister is Watching You,” *National Review* (1957)

Postscript - “Why I am Not a Conservative”

WEEK FOUR -- American Conservatism

**TOPICS:** Relation of conservative ideas to the birth of the modern American conservative movement; Modern American conservatism as an insurgency within the mid-century Republican Party; Movement to capture the Republican Party; Goldwater to Reagan. The movement-conservative Republican Party.

Albert Jay Nock, “Isaiah’s Job” (1956)

Buckley, National Review Mission Statement (1955)

Ch. 1: The Conscience of a Conservative”

Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), “The Sharon Statement” (1960)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXBswFfh6AY

Irving Kristol, “Confessions of a True, Self-Confessed - Perhaps the Only -- ‘Neoconservative’” (1979)

WEEK FIVE -- Place

**TOPICS:** What do conservatives mean by “place”? Why do they value it? What are the implications of that valuing? Do their opponents not value place? How much does
American conservatism simply represent a powerful critique of individualist liberalism and the ravages of market capitalism? How much can it be described as a strong strain of (civic) republicanism?

John Crowe Ransom, “Reconstructed but Unregenerate” (from Twelve Southerners, I’ll Take My Stand (1930))

Richard Weaver, “The Tennessee Agrarians” (1952)
Richard Weaver, “Agrarianism in Exile” (1950)
Richard Weaver, “Two Types of American Individualism” (1963)

Robert Nisbet, The Quest for Community (1953)
  Ch. 1 - The Loss of Community
  Ch. 2 - The Image of Community
  Conclusion

  From Outside the Movement: Ralph Ellison, “Harlem is Nowhere” (Harper’s 1964))

WEEK SIX -- Place (continued)

TOPICS: What is the relationship between place and the U.S. constitutional order? What was the Founders’ understanding of place? What is the value of geographical rootedness or, for that matter, robust geographic mobility? In the American context, can we separate that issue from confederatism and “neo-confederatism”? From racism? From any meaningful understanding of democracy?

US Constitution, Article I, Section 8; Article VII (Supremacy Clause); 10th Amendment; 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments

Southern Manifesto (1956)

William F. Buckley, Jr., “Segregation and Democracy” National Review (1956)

Barry Goldwater, The Conscience of a Conservative (1960):
  Ch. 3 -- States Rights
  Ch. 4 -- And Civil Rights

John T. Flynn, The Road Ahead: America’s Creeping Revolution (1949), Ch. 9 - “The War on the South”

James Jackson Kilpatrick, “The Case for States’ Rights” (1962)
Martin Diamond, “What the Framers’ Meant by Federalism” (1962)
**From Outside the Movement:** Hannah Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock” *Dissent* (1959)

Hank Williams, Jr., “If the South Woulda Won”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDkyL9c0QdY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDkyL9c0QdY)

**WEEK SEVEN -- God (Foundations/Transcendence)**

**TOPICS:** How much is conservatism simply the natural consequence of the notion that the world is superintended by a Creator God who has created Man (albeit marked by Original Sin) in his image? How much of conservatism is derived from the understanding that a Creator God stipulated the laws of nature, and enjoined Man to live by those laws? How much is the US political order premised on these assumptions? Has that changed over time? Is the US, foundationally, a Christian country? If so, does it matter what form/sect of Christianity is involved -- Protestant? Catholic? Quaker? Unitarian? Has Christianity made American freedoms and nation possible? If so, what are the implications of that for American Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Wiccans, or agnostics or atheists? Are conservatives, basically, (white) Christian nationalists?

Francis Cardinal Spellman, *The Road to Victory* (1942)
- Ch. 1 - Our God Given Rights
- Ch. 5 - Freedom to Do What is Right
- Ch. 9 - Two Anchors - Patriotism and Religion

John Courtney Murray, SJ, *We Hold These Truths: A Catholic Reflection on the American Proposition* (1960)

Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977)

- Ch. 1 -- The Abolition of Truth and Morality
- Ch. 2 -- Foundations for Faith and Freedom
- Ch. 6 -- An Open Window
- Ch. 7 -- The Limits of Civil Obedience
- Ch. 8 -- The Use of Civil Disobedience
- Ch. 9 -- The Use of Force

William Barr, Speech at the University of Notre Dame Law School (2019)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM87WMsrCWM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM87WMsrCWM)

Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Commencement Address at King’s College, NYC (2019)

WEEK EIGHT -- The State

**TOPICS:** What do conservatives (and others) mean by “the state”? How is that different from “the government”? Is the state a blessing or a problem? Why?

Albert Jay Nock, *Our Enemy, the State* (1935)  
Ch. 1

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)  
Introduction  
Ch. 3 -- Individualism and Collectivism  
Ch. 5 -- Planning and Democracy  
Ch. 6 -- Planning and the Rule of Law

Murray Rothbard, *For A New Liberty: A Libertarian Manifesto* (1973)  
Ch. 3 -- The State

Herbert Storing, “The Problem of Big Government” (1962)


WEEK NINE -- Market Freedom and Capitalism

**TOPICS:** Is there a war within the conservative mind over the virtues -- or horrors -- of capitalism, free markets, and the commitment to individual liberty (and individualism) that underwrites them? What are the benefits of free markets? How much do you think those benefits actually help generate the society that other conservatives have targeted as insufficiently respectful of stability, place, community, high culture, and authority more generally?

*From Outside the Movement:* Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Speech at Oglethorpe University” (1932)

Mount Pelerin Society, Statement of Aims (1947)


Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose* (1980)  
Ch. 1 - The Power of the Market  
Ch. 2 - The Tyranny of Controls

Irving Kristol, “On Corporate Capitalism in America” (1975)
WEEK TEN -- Communism

TOPICS: Why do you think that anticommunism became so central to the postwar conservative political understanding and identity? Postwar conservative anticommunism is often said to have been pushed to the point of crudeness, populist hysteria, conspiracy-theorizing, witch-hunting, war-mongering. Is this true? How much did vigorous anticommunism help unite what would otherwise have been a fractured and inchoate political movement? Once the Berlin Wall fell, what, if anything, has replaced anticommunism in this position within the movement? How is that working out?


Joseph McCarthy, Speech at Wheeling, West Virginia (1950)


Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952)
Forward in the Form of a Letter to My Children


Ch. 10 -- The Soviet Menace

Willmoore Kendall, “McCarthyism: The Pons Asinorum of American Conservatism” (1963)

WEEK ELEVEN -- Liberals/The Left

TOPICS: How much does the conservative outlook involve less a commitment to a set of stable, unchanging principles than a continuously unfolding critique of the liberal/left and its perpetually mutating, and escalating, societal ambitions? Is ‘owning the libs’ a core element of American conservatism?

Max Eastman, *Reflections on the Failure of Socialism* (1955)
Ch. 1 - Both Hopes are False
Ch. 3 - The Real Guarantee of Freedom
Ch. 5 - The Delinquent Liberals
Ch. 10 - Socialism and Human Nature


Irving Kristol, “The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals” (1979)

Ch. 1 - “The Quest for Cosmic Justice”
[Skim rest of book, and read a few discussions/illustrations that you find interesting to share with the class]

COUNTER: John Dewey, “The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy” (1910)
Woodrow Wilson, The New Freedom (1913)

WEEK TWELVE

Problems and Public Policies

TOPICS: How deeply intertwined is the conservative outlook on public policy in the US with the movement’s racial understandings, or blind-spots? How much is based on a more grounded and realistic understanding of human nature? How much is based on a rejection of political/social utopianism? How much is grounded in a commitment to policy based on de-politicized (liberal/leftist) ideology-free science and social science? How much is derived from foundational principles, like liberty, equality, and the rule of law?

I. Race and Civil Rights

Richard Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences (1948)
Ch. 4: Egotism in Work and Art

James Jackson Kilpatrick. “View from a Southern Exposure” (1963)
George Wallace, Inaugural Gubernatorial Address (1963)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RC0EjsUbDU

Walter Berns, “Racial Discrimination and the Limits of Judicial Remedy” (1963)


George Schuyler, “The Case Against the Civil Rights Bill” (1963)
George Schuyler, “The Rising Tide of Black Racism” (1967)

WEEK THIRTEEN -- Race (continued)

Norman Podhoretz, “My Negro Problem -- and Ours” (1963)

Ayn Rand, “Racism” (in The Virtue of Selfishness)(1961)

Ch. 1 -- The Civil Rights Vision
Ch. 2 -- From Equal Opportunity to ‘Affirmative Action’
Ch. 4 -- The Special Case of Blacks
Ch. 6 -- Rhetoric or Reality?
Jefferson Cowie, “The Hard Hat Riot Was a Preview of Today’s Political Divisions”

EACH STUDENT SHOULD CHOOSE ONE OF THE BELOW POLICY AREAS

II. Poverty and Public Assistance (Welfare)

Barry Goldwater, The Conscience of a Conservative (1960):
Ch. 7 -- Taxing and Spending
Ch. 8 -- The Welfare State

Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (1962)
Ch. 11 - Social Welfare Measures
Ch. 12 - Alleviation of Poverty


III. Crime and Public Order

Ch. 3 -- Thinking About Crime
Ch. 4 -- The Police and Crime
Ch. 5 -- Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety
Ch. 8 -- Incapacitation
Ch. 12 -- Crime and American Culture
Ch. 13 -- Crime and Public Policy


Walter Berns, “For Capital Punishment” (1979)


WEEK FOURTEEN

Trumpism, and American Conservatism’s Future

TOPICS: Does Trump and the Trump phenomenon represent continuity or a break in the postwar conservative movement? Is Trump “a conservative”? Is American conservatism in 2021 in a downward spiral? On an upwards trajectory? Treading water? How much does current conservatism -- and the recent direction of the Republican Party - - represent a turn toward illiberal authoritarianism, along the lines of Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orban in Hungary, Putin in Russian, and Duterte in the Philippines? Would that be anything new for American conservatism? From what you have read, and we have discussed, do you think the US needs a healthy conservative thought tradition? Or would the country be better off without it? Why or why not?

Roy Acuff, “Stuck Up Blues”

Donald Trump, Inaugural Address (2017)


Ben Hachten, “It’s Not Your Father’s GOP,” *The American Conservative* (November 11, 2020)

