“New” Politics in the “American Century”:
New Left and Neo-conservative Movements in the United States since 1950

Fall 2007, Fridays, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.
Instructor: Christopher Adam Mitchell
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Office hours: Mondays 4:45-5:45 and Fridays 12:30-1:30
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Course description
One of the key developments in the political and social history of the United States since World War II has been the formation of “New” Left and Right political coalitions, which have become imbedded in the ideological and popular foundations of the national party structure in the United States. This course will critically examine the relationship between older political ideas and coalitions, sometimes referred to as the “Old” Left and “Paleo-conservatives,” and their subsequent counterparts. Furthermore, we will attempt to understand the emergence of the New Left and Neo-conservative political movements in the context of Cold War United States foreign policy, the various social and civil rights movements that convulsed national politics between the 1950s and the 1960s, the so-called “culture wars” from the 1970s through the present, and varying responses to post-Cold War Globalism (including the so-called “War on Terror”) in the context of growing environmental catastrophe and the depletion of natural resources. In particular, the course will focus on the growing importance of identity politics, natural resource management, the role of free trade market policies, and foreign policy in the mobilization of New Left and Right political constituencies since the conclusion of the Second World War.

Course goals
The course is designed to provide training in advanced historical inquiry. We will discuss the identification and selection of sources, the consideration of evidence, and the critical project of historical interpretation. Students will focus on varying methods of writing and researching history as well as varying theoretical frameworks in order to develop thoughtful and critical renderings of this history. Students will choose their own objects of study and will have discretion in approaches. For example, students may choose a comparative method to show distinctions and similarities between the institutions and ideologies of the “New” Left and Right or, on the other hand, an approach that highlights continuities and discontinuities between the older and newer partisan movements.

Requirements
Attendance and participation
The seminar depends on consistent attendance and mindful preparation. Students should complete assigned readings before class and be mentally present for student directed discussions. Attendance and a high level of engagement in seminar discussions will account for 10% of the final grade. After more than one unexcused absence, the instructor will request the student to withdraw from the course.

Reaction précis and student presentation
During designated class periods, students will give class presentations over a “shadow” reading chosen by the students. Students will have the opportunity to complete one reaction précis no shorter than 1500 words over one of these additional readings listed on the syllabus due the week before the class presentation. The reaction précis will respond to the chosen reading in the historiographical context of the class readings for that week. The class presentation will consist of an oral presentation of the reaction précis. Students assigned to the week’s shadow readings
will take the initiative to lead the seminar. The presentation and reaction précis will account for 20% of your final grade.

Proposal and annotated bibliography, and drafts
Students must submit a proposal and annotated bibliography or bibliographical essay no later than October 12. Students will sign up for writing workshops. Complete first drafts must be circulated to the seminar based on the students’ schedule. Drafts will typically run between 10 and 15 double spaced pages. Workshop etiquette will be further elaborated. This assignment will account for 10% of your final grade.

Final paper/exam
The completed final draft, with full bibliography, must be submitted no later than noon on Monday, December 17. The final draft, written in accordance with A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers (Seventh Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), will constitute 40% of your final grade.

Calendar
September 7  Introduction to course, Writing History
September 14  Tour of Alexander Library
Class reading:
Howell and Prevenier, From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)

September 21  The Politics of United States Foreign Policy in the 20th Century
Class readings:
Shadow readings:


Class readings:
to know something,’ I said, ‘If I live I will become a registered voter.’” (1964) in Wright, ed., The African American Archive; (3) Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (speech, 12 April 1964); Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law” (speech, 1893) [e-RESERVE]

**Shadow readings:**


**October 5**

*Social Control, Liberation, and the Origins of Identity Politics, Part II: American Routines of Repression and Political Identity as Resistance*

**Class readings:**

(7) Robb A. McDaniel, “The Nature of Inequality: Uncovering the Modern in Leo Strauss’s Idealist Ethics” in Political Theory 26: 3 (June 1998) [JSTOR]

**Shadow readings:**

Alice Echols, Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975 (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989)


October 12

*Political Economy and Political Orientation, Part I: America as an Imperial Aggressor*


(5) Justin David Suran, “Coming out against the War: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam” from *American Quarterly* 53: 3 (September 2001) [JSTOR]

**Shadow readings:**


October 19

*Political Economy and Political Orientation, Part II: America as an Empire of Contested Liberty*


**Shadow readings:**

Thomas B. and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992)


October 26

*Love is a Battlefield: Cultural Warfare since 1970*


**Shadow readings:**


November 2  *Neo-Liberal Consensus and the Politics of Empire in the Post Cold War Era*
(1) Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*

(2) Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “Preface,” “World Order” and “Biopolitical Production” from *Empire* (Harvard, 2000) [e-RESERVE]

**Shadow reading:**

November 9  Writing workshop

November 16  Writing workshop

November 23  **Thanksgiving Day Break: No Class**

November 30  Writing workshop

December 7  Writing Workshop

December 17  **Final Paper Due**