

Department of Sociology
Emory University
Fall Semester, 2024
MW 11:30-12:45 p.m./Tarbuton 218

Dr. Frank Lechner
Tarbuton 214
flechn@emory.edu; 727-7530
Ofc.Hrs.: M 1-2:00/W 10:30-11:30

SOC 190 Freshman Seminar Sociology of Conservatism

Course description

What are the varieties of contemporary American conservatism? How has conservatism evolved as a political philosophy and movement in the United States? How do conservatives address major public issues? And what kind of future does conservatism have in America? This seminar aims to answer such questions by reading and discussing conservative texts, studying conservatives in the media and online, and debating conservative approaches to law and public policy. After reviewing some general conservative perspectives, the seminar will address issues ranging from immigration and family to gun rights and higher education. The course has two main goals: to enhance your understanding of American conservatism and to help you improve your writing and speaking skills.

Format

While some class sessions will feature brief lectures to provide background, most of this seminar will consist of collective discussion of texts and issues. We will examine several topics via informal debates, often focusing on a particular conservative thesis, or via structured team debates, focusing on a specific resolution. Some sessions will involve brief student presentations on assigned topics.

Readings

Readings (see schedule) will be linked or made available on Canvas.

Requirements (details and guidelines TBA on Canvas)

1. Regular attendance (one unexcused absence), preparation, active participation, 10%
2. Leading one class discussion, 5%
3. Two small-group assignments, 5% each
4. Two debates, preparation and participation, 5% each
5. Policy brief (small group), about 10 pages, 30%
6. Final exam, 35%

Course etiquette and rules

- Be sure to arrive on time. Repeated late arrival will result in a lower participation grade.
- Laptops are generally not allowed, except for specific tasks, as indicated by the instructor.
- This class encourages vigorous debate and expects active engagement.
- **Follow the Honor Code**, especially with regard to plagiarism. Please note:
The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, and to commit any form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the Honor Council.
- **No use of AI** for graded written work, except insofar as specifically permitted in guidelines; other uses to be discussed in class. Abiding by this rule is part of the Honor Code.

Assistance

- I am available for informal conversation, in person and virtually, during office hours and at other times, including for coffee or a meal, throughout the semester.
- The first semester in college can be challenging. If you have any difficulty with the work load in this class, or with anything else, feel free to talk to me.
- For assistance with writing, consult tutors in the [Emory Writing Center](#).
- For assistance with access or disability issues, contact adsrstudent@emory.edu.

Schedule

- I will typically remind you of upcoming readings and issues in announcements prior to each class; read them!
- All book titles and several article titles refer to **excerpts** only (posted or linked on Canvas)
- For some classes, I may ask you to submit short reflections or explore online materials
- Debates will typically require in-person or virtual group meetings the evening prior—note the dates!
- This schedule is subject to minor changes, as needed

1. Varieties of conservatism

8/28 Introduction and overview

George H. Nash, "American Conservatism & the Problem of Populism"

James W. Ceaser, "Four Heads and One Heart: The Modern Conservative Movement"

Frank S. Meyer, "Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism"

9/4 Intellectual conservatism

Jerry Muller, "What Is Conservative Social and Political Thought?"

Thomas Sowell, "A Conflict of Visions"; "The Quest for Cosmic Justice"

9/9 Economic conservatism

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*

9/11 Constitutional conservatism
George Will, *The Conservative Sensibility*
Dennis Hale/Marc Landy, *Keeping the Republic: A Defense of American Constitutionalism*

9/16 Black conservatism
Glenn Loury, Wilfred Reilly, Jason Riley, Shelby Steele
Shelby Steele, "White Guilt"
Glenn Loury, "The Bias Narrative vs. the Development Narrative"
Assignment 1: Patterns in black conservatism

9/18 Postliberal and traditionalist conservatism
James Burnham, *Suicide of the West*
Patrick Deneen, "Conservatism in America?"; "Unsustainable Liberalism"
R.R. Reno, "A New Fusionism"

9/23 Anti-woke conservatism
Christopher Rufo, *America's Cultural Revolution*
Eric Kaufmann, *The Third Awakening*
Richard Hanania, *The Origins of Woke*

9/25 National conservatism
Christopher DeMuth, "Trumpism, Nationalism, and Conservatism"
Burke Foundation, "National Conservatism: A Statement Of Principles"

2. Conservatism in the media and online

9/30 Major conservative outlets
National Review mission statement
Assignment 2: Patterns in conservative media (traditional and online)

3. Conservatism and public policy

10/2-7 **Debate.** Resolved: conservative immigration policy is critical for the nation's well-being
Details and materials TBA; group research

10/9 Family
Brad Wilcox, *Get Married: Why Americans Must Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families, and Save Civilization*

10/16 Big government
Joseph Postell, "From Administrative State to Constitutional Government"
Gary Lawson, "The Rise and Rise of the Administrative State"
Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo

10/21 School choice

Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education"

Thomas Sowell, "Tom Sowell on Charter Schools and Their Enemies"

10/23 **Final project** research and deliberation [partly in class; thesis and outline due]

4. Conservatism and law

10/28 Originalism and textualism as conservative judicial philosophy

Ilan Wurman, "The Case for Originalism"; *A Debt against the Living*

Scalia and Thomas examples

10/30 Abortion

Dobbs opinions

11/4 Guns

Bruen opinions

11/6 Religious liberty

Masterpiece Cakeshop opinions

11/11 Affirmative action

SFFA opinions

5. Conservatism and/in higher education

11/13 Conservatives in higher education

Steven Teles, "Beyond Academic Sectarianism"

Philippe Lemoine, "Response from a Conservative" (on being a campus conservative)

11/18-20 **Debate**: Resolved: Free speech is a conservative value and promotes real diversity

11/25 Conservative critiques of academic culture

Heather Mac Donald, *The Diversity Delusion*

Kevin Wallsten, "Ideology and Intolerance at America's Elite Universities";

"Higher Education's "Illiberal Liberalism" Problem"

Mark Bauerlein, "Not Giving Up Without a Fight"

12/2 Reflections: directions and prospects

12/4-9 **Final project: Presentations**

12/10 **Final project: Policy brief due**

12/16 **Final exam**

11:30-2:00 p.m.