

Conservatism in America

Spring 2012

Old Belk 1125

12:30 - 1:45 PM Tuesdays & Thursdays

Approximately 40% of American voters identify themselves as "conservative." What does this mean? What do conservatives believe? How do they behave politically? These are difficult questions; too often we hear shallow, one-dimensional answers. Answers from those on the right loudly demand loyalty to their own particular brand of conservatism to the exclusion of all others. Answers from those on the left sound like 19th Century ethnographers, titillating their readers with curiosities from ~~Darkest Africa~~ Flyover Country. In this class we will seek a better answer to those questions by unpacking the term "conservatism" to explore the diverse ideas and practices sharing a common label.

In doing so, we will echo a commonly heard conservative call for specificity and place. Instead of studying "conservatism" as a universal phenomenon, we will look at how it has developed in one particular place--America. While modern conservatism's philosophical roots extend back to the Ancient Mediterranean world, we will touch lightly on those older ideas and focus on American conservatism, particularly in the post-1945 era. How have specific features of this country shaped our conservatism? How have accidents of our specific political history shaped conservative ideas in this country? We will consider those questions and more.

Another common theme in conservatism is the juxtaposition of opportunity and responsibility. Because I believe these are better practiced than talked about, I will provide you with opportunities to learn and to earn a grade of your choice, and you will take responsibility for accomplishing them.

I will...

- provide a list of useful readings,
- prepare questions to stimulate your understanding of those readings,
- point out features of the readings I believe are important during class,
- arrange guest speakers to provide alternative perspectives,
- suggest opportunities to explore individual topics in more detail, and
- offer useful feedback throughout your learning process.

I will not...

- mark attendance
- assign busywork
- lecture (much), or
- give you tests.

George Ehrhardt
Old Belk 2050
262-7910
ehrhardtgc@appstate.edu

T/R: 12:30-1:45 PM

Office Hours:

Mon: 1:15-2:00

Wed: 1:15-2:00

Thur: 3:30-4:30

This class will be what you make of it. If you engage the material it should be educational and even enjoyable. If too many members of the class skate by with a minimal effort the whole course may crash and burn. If I see that happening I may--entirely at my own discretion--replace this structure with a standard lecture/test format for some or all students.

"The Educational Process is often an uncomfortable one."

--my alma mater's Student Handbook, 1987.

Each week, I intend to play the role of a supporter of whatever strand of conservatism we are discussing that week. Some things I say will reflect my true beliefs, some won't, but I will try to act as if they all do. Some of you may take offense at things I say on controversial issues like abortion, homosexuality, or race.

Nevertheless, free inquiry demands we allow every argument, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us. Speech is most educational when it forces us to contemplate issues or perspectives that we normally would not. To help you make the most of our time together, I neither discourage or nor punish speech that some may find offensive, and I do not tolerate students attempting to suppress other students for being offensive.

Things I have to say because there are too many lawyers in America

There are super-duper important policies that the university says you need to know. Go read them!
<http://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/syllabi>

No battle plan survives contact with the enemy, and none of my syllabi survive contact with students either. At some point mid-semester I'll almost certainly change the schedule or the grading system.

Useful Readings

There are two types of readings in this class. Each week we will read a chapter or two from a textbook history of conservatism in America to ensure that we share adequate background knowledge.

The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America, by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge (2005)

The ASU bookstore has copies of this, but if you act quickly you can order it from Amazon for \$6.40 new and even more cheaply used.

The rest of the readings (with a couple of exceptions) are *primary sources*, so that we can explore how conservatives themselves understand conservatism, in their own words. In general, I will make these readings available on ASUlearn. Unless otherwise marked, I expect you to have read them by Tuesday, although we will discuss part of the material on Thursday. Some of the readings are taken from a book I expect you to purchase:

17 (19) January: The Goldwater Moment

The Right Nation Ch. 2

Irving Kristol. "The Right Stuff" (1996)

Optional Readings

The Right Nation Ch. 1

Further Reading

Barry Goldwater. *Conscience of a Conservative*

24 January: Foundations of American Conservatism

The Right Nation. Introduction and Ch. 13

Hardy Wickwar. "Foundations of American Conservatism" *American Political Science Review*, 1947

Russell Kirk, "What are American Traditions?" *Georgia Review*, 1955.

Optional Readings

Russell Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. "John Adams and Liberty Under Law."

Mark C. Henrie, "Russell Kirk's Unfounded America"

Mark Diamond. "Conservatives, Liberals, and the Constitution"

Further Reading

Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order*

Robert Bellah, *et al.* *Habits of the Heart*

Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*

31 January: Traditional Conservatism

Russell Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. "The Idea of Conservatism."

Michael Oakshott "On being Conservative"

Richard Weaver. "Distinction and Hierarchy"

Optional Readings

Geoff Andrews. *The Slow Food Story* "Critique of the Fast Life"

Eric Voeglin "On Classical Studies"

Berger and Neuhaus. "Mediating Structures in Public Policy"

Further Reading

Frederic Bastiat, "The Law"

Edmund Burke *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*

Russell Kirk, *The Politics of Prudence*

Richard Weaver, *Ideas have Consequences*

Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*

7 February: Race and Traditional Conservatism in the South

Russell Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. "Chapter 5, Southern Conservatism: Randolph and Calhoun"

Samuel Francis. "Mr. Clinton's 'Third Revolution'"

The Right Nation. Ch. 10, particularly pages 262-264

George Wallace, "1963 Inaugural Address as Governor of Alabama [Speech]"

Optional Readings

John C. Calhoun. *Disquisition on Government* pp. 3-31

John Safford. "John C. Calhoun, Lani Guinier, and Minority Rights." *PS*, June 1995.

Donald Davidson, "Still Rebels, Still Yankees." (1972)

Further Reading

Ransom, John Crowe *et al.* *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.*

Victor Hanson. *The Other Greeks*

14 February: The Libertarian Alternative

Murray Rothbard. "Myth and Truth about Libertarianism"

Ayn Rand. "The Morality of Capitalism"

Fredrich Hayek. "Why I am not a Conservative"

Barry Goldwater. "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Russell Kirk. "Why I am not a Libertarian"

Fredrich Hayek. "Uses of Information in Society"

Further Reading

Milton Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom*

Albert Jay Nock. *Memoirs of an Superfluous Man*

Fredrich Hayek. *The Road to Serfdom*

21 February: Fusion, part 1--"Small Government"

The Right Nation, Ch. 3 & 6

William Buckley, Jr. "Notes towards and Empirical Definition of Conservatism"

Peter Drucker. "The Sickness of Government"

Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing" [Speech]

Optional Readings

E.F. Schumacher. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.* "A Question of Size"

James Q. Wilson. "The Bureaucracy Problem"

William Glaser. "Socialized Medicine in Practice"

Further Reading

Frank Meyer. *Principles and Heresies*

Michael Polanyi. "Growth of Thought in Society"

Barry Goldwater. *Conscience of a Conservative.*

28 February: Fusion, part 2--"The Anti-Communist Coalition"

Whittaker Chambers, "Foreword in the Form of a Letter to My Children" (1952)

Frank Meyer. "The Twisted Tree of Liberty"

John Birch Society. *The Blue Book.* "Preface to 1st edition" & "Section 1: Keeping Score"

Ronald Reagan. "The Evil Empire" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Barry Goldwater. *Conscience of a Conservative*.
James Burnham. "Circular Travels of the Professors"
Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, v-xviii, 3-88, 191-271
Joseph McCarthy, Speech at Wheeling, W. Va., 1950

Further Reading

Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*
James Burnham. *The Web of Subversion*
Jon Schoenwald. "We Are an Action Group: The John Birch Society and the Conservative Movement in the 1960s" in *The Conservative Sixties*.
Ellen Schlexer. *The Age of McCarthy, with Documents* (E743.S377)

6 March: The 1960s and the rise of Social Conservatism

Right Nation.

Michelle Nickerson "Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls"
P. Schlafly. "A Choice, not an Echo"

Optional Readings

Robert Hoff Summers "The Gender Wardens"
Irving Kristol. "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship"

Further Reading

Robert Bork *Slouching towards Gomorrah*

13 March: Spring Break

20 March: Conservative Culture Warriors

The Right Nation, Ch. 7

Daniel Williams. "The Moral Majority"
Robert Bork. "Killing for Convenience"
Barbara Bush. "Wellesley Commencement Address" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Daniel Patrick Moynihan. "Towards a New Intolerance" (1993)
Allan Bloom. *Closing of the American Mind*. pp. 82-137
Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. "Dan Quayle was Right." (Atlantic Monthly, 4/93)

Further Reading

Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect*
Stephen Carter. *Culture of Disbelief*
Richard John Neuhaus. *The Naked Public Square*
Paul Johnson. *Modern Times*

27 March: The Reagan Revolution

The Right Nation. Ch. 4 & 7

Robert Nisbet. "The Conservative Renaissance"

Ronald Reagan. "1981 Inaugural Address" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Daniel Patrick Moynihan. "How the Great Society Destroyed the American Family."

Nathan Glazer "The Reagan Administration's Social Policy"

Further Reading

Daniel Patrick Moynihan *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty*

James Q Wilson. *Moral Judgement*

Jude Wanniski. *The Way the World Works*

George Gilder. *Wealth and Poverty*

Charles Murray. *Losing Ground*

3 April: Neo-Conservatism

The Right Nation. Ch. 8

Irving Kristol. "The Neoconservative Persuasion"

Adam Wolfson. "Conservatives and Neoconservatives"

John F Kennedy "I am a Berliner" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Francis Fukuyama "The End of History and the Last Man"

Further Reading

Irving Kristol. *Neoconservatism.*

Norman Podhoretz. *Breaking Ranks*

Various. *The Public Interest* (quarterly, 1966-2005)

10 (12) April: 9/11 and the Bush Years

The Right Nation. Ch. 5 & 15

Daniel Mahoney. "Can Compassionate Conservatism Govern?"

Optional Readings

Paul Berman. *Terror and Liberalism.* Pp. 121-153.

Thomas Powers. "Can we be Secure and Free"

Further Reading

Timothy S. Goeglein and Karl Rove. *The Man in the Middle: An Inside Account of Faith and Politics in the George W. Bush Era*

Frank Bruni. *Ambling Into History: The Unlikely Odyssey of George W. Bush*

17 April: Guns and Granola--the Crunchy-Cons

Wendell Berry, "The Agrarian Standard" (2002)

Allan Carlson, "Compassionate Conservatism: Ten Lessons from the New Agrarians"

Joel Salatin, "Everything I want to do is Illegal"

Optional Readings

E.F. Schumacher. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. "Buddhist Economics"

Rod Dreher. *Crunchy-Cons*. Chapter 1

Author Unknown. "The Political Garden"

Further Reading

E.F. Schumacher. *Small Is Beautiful*

Wendell Berry. *The Art of the Commonplace*

Joel Salatin. *Everything I want to do is Illegal*

24 April: The Tea Party

Samuel Francis. "The New Shape of American Politics" (1997)

Mark Lloyd. "The Battle for Virginia's 5th District"

Rick Santelli. "The shout heard 'round the world" [Speech]

Optional Readings

Lorie Medina. "Community Organizing for Conservatives" (2011)

Further Reading

John O'Hara. *A New American Tea Party*

Thomas Sowell. *Visions of the Anointed*

Christopher Lasch. *The Revolt of the Elites*

Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*

1 May Conservatism Today, and Tomorrow.

The Right Nation. Conclusion.

Jerry Muller. "Dilemmas of Conservatism"

Rudyard Kipling. "The Gods of the Copy-Book Headings."

Optional Readings

Doug Bandow. "Freedom and Virtue: Allies or Antagonists"

Further Reading

George Nash. *Reappraising the Right: Past and Future*

Learning Opportunities

This class has no required assignments. You may choose as many or as few of the following activities as you wish. Each activity has a certain point value attached. If you do an activity properly, you will accumulate the full point value. If I judge that you did a half-assed job on something, I will return it to you to redo or abandon.

You will earn a final course grade by the number of points you accumulate during the semester.

>2000	>1900	>1800	>1700	>1600	>1400	>1300	>1200	<1000
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D or F

Many of these activities involve several steps. You must complete the multi-step process to receive credit for the activity.

Challenge your beliefs	Reading Journal	Speech Recitation	Suggested Reading Speech	Suggested Reading Brief	Weekly Online Commentary	Brief/Speech Critic	Field Work	Know Thyself
100	100	150	100	75	25-50	25	200	100

To earn an A, you should average about 150 points per week. If you wait until the end, there may not be enough speech/critic opportunities for everyone and you may be left with a lower grade than you had planned. If there are more volunteers for speeches or critiques than there are slots in a given day, preference will go to those who have participated least recently.

Late Work: Students who have had me before know that I typically accept late work. It seems to me, however, that understanding conservative ideas about individual responsibility and consequences will be easier if you experience them. As a result, I will not accept late work for this course.

I do not want excuses or requests for special treatment. Instead, the points awarded for each opportunity are higher than I would prefer relative to the grade standards, because we all slip up sometimes and none of us are immune to Fortune's slings and arrows. Plan ahead to leave yourself a cushion in case something happens to you.

Late Assignments: Responsibility is a two-way street, and I can't expect you to be timely if I am not. Accordingly, if I do not post the readings and questions by class time one week before they are due, all students will receive the 100 points for having done a "Reading Journal." If I do not post anything on the blog for students to comment on by Tuesday night, all students will receive the 25 points for online commentary that week.

Format Preferences: The first page of anything you turn in (be it paper, peer feedback, or reflection) should include your name, the assignment due date and a statement of what the document is. Otherwise, I don't get compulsive about format, but I prefer 1.5 spacing and 1" margins for your written work. All multi-page documents should number each page.

Complimentarity: You may do either of the first two opportunities on a given topic, but not both.

1. Challenge your beliefs

100 points

I will post a list of questions for each topic in a Word document on ASUlearn. Answer them **before** you do the reading. Put down what you believe right now, don't research the topic. Please type these into the downloaded file and print it out. Then do the reading. Go through the questions again, using a clean version of the Word document, and explain in detail how **the author(s)** would answer the questions.

Write a short essay reflecting on how the author challenges your beliefs. You should do more than list differences: lay out the author's arguments (and evidence) against your beliefs, and reflect on what changes in your own beliefs may be warranted.

This essay should run at least two full pages. The simple way to do this would be to break it up by belief. Tying the different beliefs into a single essay with a coherent structure is a good challenge for your writing skills.

Logistics: When you're finished, you should have three files. Put the final essay on top, and mark it with your name, the date, and the author who is challenging your beliefs. Staple them and hand me a copy during the class we discuss that author. These are due on **Tuesday** of the week we discuss a reading. If you are not in class that day you may email them to me, then bring a hard copy on Thursday.

2. Reading Journal

100 points

As you read, take notes on what the author is saying. What is his thesis? What are his important points? What evidence does he offer for the arguments? What big issues does he raise? What questions does he raise and leave unanswered? What else did you think as you read? Print out a copy of these notes and bring it to class. There is enough material in each of the week's readings to fill several pages of notes.

Listen carefully to class discussion with your notes in front of you and write down points/questions/issues etc. that you missed in your notes. After class, look over your edited notes and write a brief (2-3 pages) essay doing one of two things: a) respond to class discussion, or b) lay out the biggest holes in your original reading/understanding, why you might have missed those things, and what might help you do better next time.

Logistics: When you're done, make a photocopy of your notes (the typed version on which you wrote notes in class). Put your name, the date, and the author you read. Staple that to a copy of your reflection essay and turn them in the following **Tuesday** after we discuss the reading.

3. Speech Recitation

150 Points

The course website includes a transcripts and .mp3 audio files for number of famous conservative speeches. You may recite a speech in front of the class. This may be on Tuesday or Thursday--ask in advance when to schedule it. Some speeches may be edited for brevity, please ask if you feel it appropriate. If you know of a different speech you would like to perform, please ask.

This recitation involves several parts. First, listen carefully to the audio file while reading along on the transcript. Then write a (2-3 pages) short brief on the delivery, addressing issues like: a) describing the

speaker's style, b) how does he/she use voice to accentuate parts of the speech, c) how does the speaker use pauses, and d) what do **you** have to work on in order to imitate the speaker's delivery. Then perform the speech (usually at the beginning of class), doing your best to imitate the original speaker. Afterwards, watch the video and write a 1-2 page essay critiquing your own performance and articulating what you can do differently to become a better speaker.

Then think of 3 interesting/controversial questions one might ask the speaker, **and** how the speaker would respond. Write the questions and answers down and bring them to class--then be prepared to answer questions **as the person whose speech you are reciting**.

Logistics: You should tell me you plan to recite a speech at least three days in advance so I can prepare the video camera and tripod. The essay on the speaker's delivery and the sample Q&A are due before you start the speech. The post-speech critique is due the next class period.

4. Additional Reading (Speech Version) 100 points

Read one of the optional readings on the syllabus. Give a 5-10 minute speech in which you do several things: 1) identify the author's thesis and his/her strongest arguments, 2) explain how this connects to the required reading and other texts we've covered, and 3) prepare three discussion-provoking questions for the class and lead a short discussion.

Logistics. Please inform me 3 days in advance so I can prepare a video recorder. Afterwards, watch the video and write a 1-2 page essay critiquing your own performance and articulating what you can do differently to become a better speaker.

5. Additional Reading (Written Version) 75 points

Read one of the suggested readings on the syllabus. Prepare a 3-4 page essay in which you identify the author's thesis and his strongest arguments, and explain how it connects to the required reading and other texts we've covered.

6. Online Commentary 25-50 points

I will maintain a blog for this class, finding relevant news articles or editorials. Thoughtful, substantive commentary that engages the original post or subsequent comments will receive 25 points (per week). If you have articles that you wish to post about, send me the link and your commentary. If it looks interesting, I will post it for 50 points that week.

7. Brief/Speech Critic 25 points

Provide public feedback immediately after the speech, with your first impressions about what the speaker did well, what did the speaker did poorly. The next day, watch the video on ASUlearn write a 2 page critique. Upload it to ASUlearn. You must have read the day's assignment to critique a speech.

For a written brief, write a 2 page critique about the brief, covering both the writing skills and the content. Email it to the speaker (and cc me). You must have read the day's assignment to critique a brief.

8. Field Work 200 points

The best place to learn about the world is IN the world. You may do one of two things: conduct two interviews and write a brief essay about what you find, or attend monthly meetings of a local conservative organization and write a brief essay about what you find.

The two interviews should be with individuals who are (or were) politically active conservatives, but not members of your family or other students. Before doing your interviews, you should think of a theme--central topic(s) that you want to learn about, and a provisional list of questions. You should also read the guide to interviewing I will put online. The two individuals should both be connected to your theme, though they needn't be connected to each other. You must send me your theme and who your subjects are ahead of time. When you are done, turn in: 1) an essay describing your theme, what you wanted to learn, how the interviews went, and what you learned, and 2) your interview notes (in their raw form).

You may also observe a local conservative organization. The two obvious candidates are the Republican Party and the Tea Party, though I am open to other suggestions (if your home is nearby, you are welcome to do your home county's organization). If you are not a member of a campus organization like the CRs or Students for Liberty, you may observe them. You must get the group's permission and attend at least one event a month. You should also read the guide to ethnography I will put online. Before starting, you should develop a set of topics you would like to pursue as you observe. This set may evolve as you watch and learn new things. You must send me your proposed group and topics ahead of time. When you are done, turn in: 1) an essay describing what you wanted to learn, what you observed about those topics, and what topics you might like to pursue in further research, and 2) your observation notes (in their raw form).

9. Know Thyself 100 points

I encourage you to think about your own place in all this. Decide which of the traditions we've discussed resonates with you the most. Give a summary--in your own words, no quotations--of what that tradition stands for and why it is meaningful. What are its weaknesses? Then describe your own position--where are you most in agreement, where do you disagree, and why? What are the weaknesses in your own political thinking? Have your positions changed over the course of the semester?

	Challenge your beliefs	Reading Journal	Speech Recitation	Suggested Reading Speech	Suggested Reading Brief	Online Commentary	Brief Critic	Speech Critic	Know Thyself
	100	100	150	100	75	50	25	25	100
1/17									
1/24									
1/31									
2/7									
2/14									
2/21									
2/28									
3/6									
3/20									
3/27									
4/3									
4/12									
4/17									
4/24									
5/1									
Course Total									

How to Speak and Write Well

This list for speakers and writers comes from Scalia and Garner's book *Making your Case: the Art of Persuading Judges*.¹ The book offers much more advice, but these are what I think will make the biggest difference for the student writing/presentations I see in class. If you are preparing to write or speak, think about how you can accomplish them. Conversely, if you are unsure what to write in a critique, go through this list and think about how well they did on each point.

General

1. Always start with a statement of the issue at hand, then offer your thesis.
2. Pick your best arguments: focus and emphasize them
3. Make it interesting
4. Close powerfully.

Speaking style

1. Prepare yourself physically before you start
2. Make eye contact
3. Master a public speaking voice
4. Master the Pause

Writing style

1. Value clarity above all else
2. Use paragraphs intelligently

Critique Logistics

Your written critiques should include the following information at the top of the first page.

Speaker/Author's Name

Date of Speech or Brief

Your name

Email a copy of your critique in .doc or .pdf format to both the speaker/author and I.

Print out a copy of your critique and put it in your binder.

Mark that you did it on your activity record sheet.

If you don't do all of these things you may not receive credit for your critique.

¹ While the authors generally refer to courtroom situations, their advice is valuable for anyone trying to make a coherent argument in speech or writing.