

**PSC 275: ISSUES IN POLITICAL THOUGHT
SPRING 2011
TTH 10-11:15 JHN 109
PROFESSOR ARISTIDE TESSITORE**

**THE TOCQUEVILLE PROGRAM 2010-2011:
LIBERAL EDUCATION AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY**

OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS:

From the beginning of the American Republic, our best statesman and thinkers have seen an essential connection between liberal democracy and liberal education. According to Thomas Jefferson, the extensive educational plan he proposed for his native Virginia was a necessary means for “rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty.” Robert Maynard Hutchins, the influential president of the University of Chicago, wrote that “the object of the educational system, taken as a whole, is not to produce hands for industry or to teach the young how to make a living. It is to produce responsible citizens.” For both Jefferson and Hutchins, a free society cannot long subsist without vibrant institutions of liberal learning, fully mindful of their dependence on the liberal democratic political institutions that sustain them.

The curriculums Jefferson and Hutchins envisioned, however, have little relation to what is taught in American universities today. The rich education in political history Jefferson thought necessary to the protection of democratic liberty would be hard to come by on most campuses. The “Great Books” approach championed by Hutchins has fallen out of favor at all but a tiny minority of colleges. In its place, one all too often finds a smorgasbord of topical approaches, methodological disputes, ill-concealed political advocacy, and a decimated set of general education requirements that has somehow inherited the mantle of liberal education.

Recently, the atomization of our university curriculums has combined with the financial crisis to produce a disturbing prospect for all those who care for genuine liberal education. Parents, students, and politicians have begun to wonder whether the kinds of education available at our colleges and universities are worth a price tag that strains the limits of middle-class credulity. At the same time, our universities seem increasingly incapable of giving an account of their function in terms of the high and noble purpose of liberal education itself: the full development of the human person. Instead, we hear the value of higher education justified in terms of economic, technological, and social utility. But precisely insofar as we conceive of the role of universities in *merely* utilitarian terms, the prospect of their replacement by less pretentious and expensive modes of credentialing, such as online and explicitly vocational training, becomes more thinkable. In terms of both liberal education’s present malaise and its uncertain future, the possibility that Jefferson and Hutchins may have been right in supposing that liberal democracy was unsustainable without a liberally educated citizenry should give us pause.

These considerations thus make the present moment a timely one for asking a timeless question: What is liberal education? In particular, what is—or should be—*liberal*, or liberating, about such an education? What is the moral and political function of liberal education? What, ultimately, does it mean to be educated? What, ultimately, does it mean to be free?

COURSE DESIGN:

“Liberal Education and Liberal Democracy” integrates two distinct types of material. The first consists primarily of classic texts in the history of political thought, supplemented by texts that bear directly on the theme liberal education and politics. The second draws upon the work of some of the most influential contemporary thinkers who address the theme of liberal education in the contemporary context. A unique aspect of this course is that it includes campus visits and lectures by three scholars who are on the cutting edge of this debate. The speaker program has been made possible through the generosity of the *Tocqueville Program at Furman University*. Students will have an opportunity to interact with speakers in both formal and informal ways during the course of the term.

GUEST LECTURERS: Sponsored by *The Tocqueville Program at Furman University*

March 2: Professor Martha Nussbaum, “Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs Liberal Education”

March 23: Professor Thomas Pangle, “Liberal Education and Liberal Democracy”

April 13: Professor Mark Bauerlein, “The Dumbest Generation and the Burdens (not Freedoms) of Democracy”

All lectures are at 8:00 p.m., Watkins Room, University Center

SOMEWHAT TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

INTRODUCTION: (2 Weeks)

- Course Introduction
- The Contemporary University?
 - Tom Wolfe, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*
 - Recommended: “The Human Beast” (Moodle)
“Sorry, But Your Soul Just Died” (Moodle)

PART I: CLASSICAL ROOTS (2 Weeks)

- Plato, *Apology of Socrates*
- Plato, An Image of Education (*Republic VII*, Moodle)
- Plato, *The Laws* Bks. 1-2
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics 1.1-2* (Moodle)

PART II: THE MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITY (1 Week)

- Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* Bk. 2 chaps. 25-42 (Moodle)
- Ernest Fortin, “Why Christians Invented the University” (Moodle)
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologica 1.1. articles 1-10* (Moodle)
- Ernest Fortin, “Thomas Aquinas and the Reform of Christian Education” (Moodle)

PART III: THE MODERN PROJECT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR EDUCATION (2 weeks)

- Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration*
- John Locke
 - “The State of Nature” and “Ends of Government,” from the *Second Treatise of Government* (Moodle)
 - *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of Understanding* (selections)
- Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients and Moderns Compared” (Moodle)
- Thomas Jefferson, *On Education and Citizenship* (selections, Moodle)
 - Recommended: Natural Aristocracy and Democracy, to John Adams, October 28, 1813 (Moodle)
- *MidTerm Exam: Tuesday, March 1*

PART IV: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES (3 Weeks)

- Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*
- Thomas Pangle, *The Ennobling of Democracy: The Challenge of the Postmodern Age*
- Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*

PART V: SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

One or more of these readings may be assigned during the final segment of the course based on student interest and time constraints. All are recommended.

- John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University*, Discourses V-VI, (Moodle)
- Liberal Education versus the Research University
 - Anthony Kronman, *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, chap. 3: “The Research Ideal” (Moodle)
- Dewey versus Hutchinson on Educational Reform
 - John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, chaps. 1-2 (Moodle)
 - Dewey-Hutchinson Debate, *The Social Frontier* (Moodle)
- Competing Visions of Liberal Education
 - Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*
 - “Introduction: Our Virtue” (Moodle)
 - “The Clean Slate” (Moodle)
 - Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*

- “Introduction: Relativism: Finding and Making” (Moodle)
 - “Education as Socialization and as Individualization” (Moodle)
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*
 - “Introduction (Moodle)
 - “Reconceiving the University as an Institution and the Lecture as a Genre” (Moodle)
- *Paper due on last class day, April 26*
- *Final Exam: Wednesday, May 4 at 8:30 am*

REQUIRED TEXTS: (in the University Bookstore)

Please use specific editions listed below

- Tom Wolfe, *I am Charlotte Simmons* (Picador edition)
- Plato, *Four Texts on Socrates* (Cornell University Press, West translation)
- Plato, *The Laws of Plato* (University of Chicago, Pangle translation)
- Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration* (Crofts Classics)
- Nussbaum, Martha, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton University Press)
- Pangle, Thomas, *The Ennobling of Democracy: The Challenge of the Postmodern Age* (Johns Hopkins University Press)
- Bauerlein, Mark, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (Jeremy Tarcher/Penguin)

REQUIREMENTS:

- Regular attendance and active participation in class
- Attendance at the three lectures on Liberal Education and Liberal Democracy
- Midterm and Final examinations
- One 10-13 page Paper
- Brief Oral Presentations in Class (recommended, not required)

GRADING:

The two exams and one paper will be equally weighted to determine the course grade. The final average can be raised or lowered according to the quality of a student’s class participation (including brief class presentations recommended above).

OFFICE HOURS:

- Johns Hall 111E; Telephone extension: 3331
- Officially: M-F: 3:00-4:00. I am, however, in my office a lot and you are always welcome to come by. If I am busy at the moment, we will schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students with more than two *unexcused* cuts adversely affect their participation grade. Beginning with the third unexcused absence, each

missed class is penalized one-third of a letter grade. Conversely, the quality of a student's active engagement with course materials raises participation grades.

DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services (294-2320). The office is located in ADM 207. After this meeting, please see me to discuss any needed accommodations. It is in your interest to attend to this EARLY in the term.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Integrity gives the educational enterprise its legitimacy. Honesty, respect, and personal responsibility are principles that guide academic life at Furman, in and out of the classroom. Academic misconduct in any form (plagiarism, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, and other efforts to gain an unfair academic advantage) threatens the values of the campus community and will have severe consequences, such as failure in the course, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any question about what constitutes plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, it is your responsibility to consult with me so that you will fully understand what I expect of you in this course. If you have any doubts, ask! You should also be familiar with the information available at www.furman.edu/main/integrity.htm. A copy of Furman's policy on academic dishonesty can also be found at this site.