

SPRING 2006

POLITICAL THOUGHT SEMINAR

470 001

**Instructor:**

William B Allen  
HRS: TTh 12:30-2:30

307 S. Kedzie Hall  
432-9967

[allenwi@msu.edu](mailto:allenwi@msu.edu)

Capstone course in one area of political thought. The 2006 topic will be: Freedom.

Credits: Total Credits: 4 *Lecture/Recitation/Discussion*. Hours: 4. 4(4-0)

Prerequisite: (PLS 371 or PLS 372 or PLS 377) and completion of Tier I writing requirement.

Restrictions: Open only to juniors or seniors in the Department of Political Science or Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Science major with political science as the disciplinary cognate or approval of department.

**Description:**

### **THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF H. B. STOWE**

This capstone course aims to illuminate one area of political thought. In 2006 the topic will be Harriet Stowe's moral account of freedom and the reasoning associated with it. We will read several of her works, chief among them, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Prior to beginning the text, we will establish a context for the discussion by reviewing Frederick Douglass powerful question, "What country have I?", and the political, religious, and cultural contexts in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written. Our goal is to understand just how Stowe came to formulate her ideas and why she had the impact on American society that she did. We also want to consider whether the philosophical ideas that informed her work bear any direct responsibility for the political events that unfolded as a result of her work.

In the initial meeting I will review at some length the question of Stowe's treatment by orthodox literary interpreters and critics, as well the philosophical antecedents of her work (including the contributions of her husband, Calvin Ellis Stowe). Stowe is largely regarded as a melodramatic artist, retailing the customary prejudices of her era and even specifically harming through negative stereotypes the way American blacks came to be regarded. She has never been included among the writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "American Renaissance," in which the names of Hawthorne, Melville, and Emerson figure so largely. We will wish to know, however, how it could occur that she could attain such far-reaching influence, if indeed so little endowed as these approaches would suggest. Finally, we will explore Stowe's more abstract account of modernity, *Oldtown Folks*, in which she specifically assesses the status of the American regime in the light of human possibilities. We will inquire whether her notion of human possibilities rises to the level of philosophic clarity.

#### **Books**

##### **Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp**

Author: Stowe; Edition; ISBN: 0807856851; Publisher: University of North Carolina Press; Required Text

**Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the civil War: Selections from His Writings**

Author: Frederick Douglass; Edition; ISBN: 04864431711; Publisher: Dover Publications; Required Text

**MY BONDAGE & MY FREEDOM (ED: SMITH)**

Author: Frederick Douglass; Copyright: 03; ISBN: 0140439188; Publisher: PENGUIN Required Text

[Three Novels: Uncle Tom's Cabin; The Minister's Wooing; Oldtown Folks](#)

**Author:** Stowe, Harriet Beecher et al. **Publisher:** Library of America, **ISBN or UPC:** 0-940450-01-1(*Active Record*). Required Text

**Uncle Tom's Cabin**

Author: Stowe; Edition: 2002; ISBN: 0195158164; Publisher: Oxford;

**The Minister's Wooing**

Author: Stowe; Edition; ISBN: 0403001870; Publisher: Scholarly Press, Inc;

**Oldtown Folks**

Author: Stowe; Edition; ISBN: 0594010234; Publisher: Eighteen Hundred Seventy Three Press;

**A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin**

Author: Stowe; Edition; ISBN: 1587420384; Publisher: Inkling Books; Recommended Text.

METHOD This is a seminar class. Though by necessity the instructor will lead most discussions through textual analysis, the class is designed to call upon the student's talents of reading, observation, and conversation. Properly speaking, the texts are our teachers. We have the obligation to get to know them and to discuss them with our colleagues in a responsible manner. The "first" student in the seminar will have the obligation to open conversation with a question and to encourage all other students to participate.

Students will be asked to write a mid-term essay that identifies and analytically defines the central themes of the course and then a final essay that discusses them contextually. That final paper will be submitted in draft form, commented upon and returned, and then finally submitted in a polished form for grading. This course satisfies MSU's Tier-II writing requirement. Accordingly, the excellence of the writing will be as important as the correctness of the argument. In fact, though, I have never seen a case of bad writing and good thinking in a single production. If someone believes that is possible, however, and wishes to challenge the proposition that a paper ill written cannot qualify for meritorious evaluation even when its argument is otherwise sound, I respond at the outset that it will be the policy of this course to make good writing a pre-condition for meritorious evaluation of every paper (please see appendix to this syllabus for criteria used to evaluate written work). Subject to limitations of numbers (and hence a revision in approach), every final paper will be subject to final examination in a seminar setting in the regularly scheduled final examination slot).

*This course will be conducted in accord with MSU and Department of Political Science policies respecting academic honesty and academic responsibility. Anyone in doubt about the requirements of those codes and policies should contact the professor at the outset of the course.*

One finds most of the books to be referred to in this course in the local bookstores, either the MSU Bookstore at the International Center or the independent bookstores in East Lansing. A course pack will be made available at the class meeting. Articles to be copied will be on reserve in Library.

**Honors Option:** Students wishing to pursue the honors option should make their wishes known to the professor before the end of the second week of the term. The actual honors option assignment and sessions will be determined after that time, but will involve additional readings and weekly discussion of these readings. Then H/O students will incorporate the additional assignments in the development of the term assignment for the course.

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Classroom participation – ten percent (10%) of the semester grade.
2. Mid-Term 35%

A mid-term essay as described above must be submitted no later than the end of class on Tuesday, February 28, 2006. The essays will be graded and the results reported by March 5th. The essay will be graded on a 100-point scale, and it will contribute 35% of the average class grade.

3. Final Paper 55%

A final paper as described above must be submitted no later than the end of class on Thursday, April, 27. The paper will be graded on a 100-point scale, and it will contribute 55% of the average class grade. Moreover, *in order to qualify a final paper for evaluation*, it must be preceded by submission of a draft final paper, no later than Friday, April 7, 2006.

### **Grade calculation**

Course averages, on the 100-point scale, will be converted to MSU 4-point grades on the following table:

96-100 =	4.0
90-95 =	3.5
84-89 =	3.0
78-83 =	2.5
72-77 =	2.0
66-71 =	1.5
60-65 =	1.0

&lt; 60 = 0.0

READING CALENDAR

WEEK ONE:	Jan 10	“Rethinking Uncle Tom: Book I”
	Jan 12	“Rethinking Uncle Tom: Book I”
WEEK TWO:	Jan 17	Douglass, <i>My Freedom and my Bondage</i>
	Jan 19	Douglass, <i>My Freedom and my Bondage</i>
WEEK THREE:	Jan 24	<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>
	Jan 26	<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>
WEEK FOUR:	Jan 31	<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>
	Feb 02	[ <i>Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> ]
WEEK FIVE:	Feb 07	<i>Sunny Memories</i> , v 1
	Feb 09	<i>Sunny Memories</i> , v. 1
WEEK SIX:	Feb 14	<i>Sunny Memories</i> , v. 2
	Feb 16	<i>Sunny Memories</i> , v. 2
WEEK SEVEN:	Feb 21	<i>Dred</i>
	Feb 23	<i>Dred</i>
WEEK EIGHT:	Feb 28	<i>My Wife and I</i> ; <b>mid-term due</b>
	Mar 02	<i>My Wife and I</i>
WEEK NINE:	Mar 06	SPRING BREAK
WEEK TEN:	Mar 14	Douglass, <i>Slavery and the Civil War</i>
	Mar 16	Douglass, <i>Slavery and the Civil War</i>
WEEK ELEVEN:	Mar 21	<i>Oldtown Folks</i>
	Mar 28	<i>Oldtown Folks</i>
WEEK TWELVE:	Apr 04	“Rethinking Uncle Tom: Book II”
	Apr 06	“Rethinking Uncle Tom” <b>paper draft due Apr. 07.</b>
WEEK THIRTEEN:	Apr 11	“Rethinking Uncle Tom: Book III”
	Apr 13	“Rethinking Uncle Tom: Book IV”
WEEK FOURTEEN:	Apr 18	Research and Writing
	Apr 20	Research and Writing
WEEK FIFTEEN:	Apr 25	“Rethinking Uncle Tom”
	Apr 27	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE: 5 p.m.</b>

Criteria Used in Evaluating Written Work

While there will be many opportunities for oral discussion of written work, it will be helpful to adopt a grading scale and to commit ourselves to the use of certain explicit criteria.

The scale is numerical, as follows:

- 1- excellent
- 2- good
- 3- satisfactory
- 4- poor
- 5- very poor

To receive a 1 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. There should be a clearly stated thesis and a clearly developed line of argument.
- b. There should be a sense of organization in both the individual paragraphs and in the theme as a whole.
- c. The individual paragraphs should be developed and related logically to one another and to the thesis of the paper as a whole.
- d. There should be few glaring errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- e. Generalizations should be supported by concrete supporting evidence, and the paper should avoid stereotyped lines of argumentation.

To receive a 2 rating a paper should have all the ingredients of an excellent essay (1 rating), except that there will probably be minor problems in one or two of the above areas (a-e).

To receive a 3 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. The basic criteria for a satisfactory essay is that the student must make himself understood and must communicate ideas in spite of some technical problems.
- b. It follows that a paper receiving a 3 rating should demonstrate by college standards an adequate sense of organization, paragraphing, argumentation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Otherwise, of course, the student will not communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Essays receiving a 4 rating are generally characterized by any combination of the following:

- a. There is oftentimes an insufficient development of ideas.
- b. The student often avoids discussing the topic.
- c. There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- d. There is no clearly stated thesis and no clearly developed argument.
- e. Principles or organizing both paragraphs and the theme as a whole are ignored or applied in a very haphazard manner.
- f. There is oftentimes a lack of adequate subordination and coordination of ideas, thus resulting in too many short, choppy sentences.
- g. Generalizations oftentimes go unsupported by concrete detail, and the line of argument (if one exists) is oftentimes a rehash of clichés and stereotypes.

Essays receiving a 5 rating are generally characterized by the student's inability to make himself understood due to frequent and major problems in many of the above areas (a-g of the 4 rated essays). Due to these problems the essay is almost incoherent.

## RULES GOVERNING WRITTEN COMPOSITIONS

### *General*

1. A margin of about an inch should be observed at the left and a margin of one-half inch on the right of every theme.
2. Paragraphs must be indented another inch.
3. All compositions should be neatly written.
4. One line should be left between the title and the composition.
5. Choose words carefully to avoid repetition and to give variety.
6. All numbers up to 100 should be written out except in addresses, dates, and statistics, or where consistency demands that the Arabic numbers be used.

### *Punctuation*

11. A comma is used after *yes* and *no* in answering questions.
12. Nouns of address are set off by commas.
13. Words in a series are separated-by-commas.
14. The second and all following items in addresses and dates should be set off by commas.
15. Words in apposition are set off by commas.
16. Commas should be used before conjunctions joining coordinate clauses.
17. Introductory adverbial clauses must be followed *by* a comma.
18. Participial groups coming first should be set off by commas.
19. Participial groups coming far after their nouns should be set off by commas.
20. Participial groups used to explain why or how or when should be set off by commas.
21. Direct quotations are indicated by comma, quotation marks, and capital letter. They are closed by period or question mark and quotation marks.

Examples of three types of quotations:

(a) John said, "May I go to the show?"

(b) "May I go to the show?" said John.

(If this had not been a question, a comma would have been used)

(c) "May I," said John, "go to the show?"

22. Non-restrictive clauses should be set off by commas.
23. A period is used at the close of a declarative sentence.
24. A period is used after all abbreviations.
25. A question mark is used after an interrogative sentence.
26. An exclamation mark should be used only after an exclamatory sentence.
27. The first word of every sentence should be capitalized.
28. The first and all other words except prepositions, articles, and conjunctions in the title should be capitalized.
29. Proper nouns and proper adjectives should be capitalized.

### *Grammar and Structure*

31. A pronoun should always refer to a definite antecedent.
32. A participle should always modify a noun or pronoun.
33. Verbs should always agree with their subjects in number.
34. Tense consistency should be observed.
35. The correct case form of pronouns should be used.
36. Every sentence must be complete.

### *Spelling*

41. *All* words whose spelling is not known should be looked up in a dictionary.
42. Final *e* is dropped before adding *ing*, *ed*, *er*, *est*.
43. A word ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel and having the accent on the last syllable doubles the final consonant before adding *ing*, *er*, *est*, *ed*.
44. *i* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded as *a* as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.
45. The plural of words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant is formed by changing *y* to *i* and by adding *es*.
46. The correct form of abbreviations should be used.
47. The singular possessive of a noun is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*. The possessive form of a pronoun does not use an apostrophe.
48. The plural possessive of a word whose plural ends in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe.
49. The plural possessive of a word whose plural does not end in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*.
50. Words should be properly divided at the end of the line.
51. An apostrophe is used in contractions to designate the omission of a letter or successive letters: e.g.

they're=they *are*

it's=it is

doesn't=does not

I'd=I would or I should

[✚ Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article](#)

**Author:** Becker, Howard S. **Publisher:** University of Chicago Press **ISBN or UPC:** 0-226-04108-5. **Date:** Mar 1986 **Price:** \$ 9.95 **Availability:** Readily Available

*A Rulebook for Arguments* **Author:** [Anthony Weston](#) **Publication Date:** January 2001 **Publisher:** [Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated](#) **ISBN:** 0-87220-552-5 Paper **Edition:** 3, Revised **Pages:** xiv, 87 **Price:** \$5.95(USD) Retail (Publisher) **Available Through:** Alibris; Baker & Taylor Books; Bertrams Books; Brodart Company; Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.; Gardners Books Limited

[✚ Writing with Sources](#) **Author:** Harvey, Gordon **Publisher:** Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated **ISBN or UPC:** 0-87220-434-0 **Date:** Jun 1998 **Price:** \$ 4.95 **Market:** United States **Availability:** Readily Available