

Landscape of American Thought, Spring 2013  
TR 8:00-9:20; Anderson Hall 721

**Instructor Information**

Instructor: Travis Perry

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Office Hours: TR: 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

**Course Description**

America once was envisioned by its colonizers as a new world, as a city upon a hill beckoning to humanity. After centuries of conquest, enslavement, immigration, and political struggle, conditions for sustaining this early vision continue to evolve. This course explores the emergence of some of the most distinctive and influential American voices to inform our national debate about freedom, the individual, gender, race, democracy, and oppression, as it has unfolded over the past two centuries. Through considering a selection of works of some of the most renowned figures to shape the landscape of American public discourse, we return to face the question of the promise of America, as it plays out today in the thought of some of the leading public intellectuals of our time.

**Course Objectives**

- Develop critical reading skills through close reading of philosophical texts.
- Develop analytical writing skills.
- Understand some of the major issues in American thought.

**Required Texts**

- Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, Holt, Henry & Company, Inc., 2004
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, Penguin, 1996
- Paul Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal*, Norton, 2009
- Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, Penguin, 2004
- Additional readings will be available on Blackboard (BB) or on the course e-reserves (ER) page, which is accessible through the Temple University Library website. Please print the readings and bring a copy to class on the day they will be discussed.

**Classroom Expectations**

- Please come to class on time. Arriving late is distracting to the class.
- **No electronic devices are allowed in class.** Using any electronic device during class will result in a loss of attendance and participation points for that day.
- We will often discuss issues that can become quite contentious, so it is important to maintain a professional, respectful, and engaged attitude toward your classmates and me. Counterarguments are always welcome, and in fact are encouraged; but when we disagree it is important to do so in a productive manner.

## Course Requirements

- Participation and Attendance: 20%
- Group Presentations: 30% (10% for each presentation)
  - Students will be separated in to five groups (A, B, C, D, and E), and each group will give three presentations. Successful presentations will achieve two goals: 1) the presenters will give a brief summary of the assigned reading, and 2) presenters will provide at least five discussion questions that bring together both the reading being presented and the reading assigned to the entire class for that day. **If you are absent on the day of your group's presentation you will receive no credit, resulting in a 10% deduction from your overall grade for the course.**
- Two Short Papers: 20% (10% each)
  - Both papers should 1) demonstrate a clear understanding of the arguments each figure uses, 2) incorporate direct quotations or close paraphrases from the texts, and 3) develop an original and thoughtful argument. Papers should use a standard citation and writing style, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago. Each paper will address at least two figures but will focus on one particular issue. Each short paper should be at least 750 words, but no more than 1,000 words.
  - The first paper will focus on slavery, abolition, or the first moves toward racial equality. For the first paper students can use ideas from Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, Du Bois, or Zinn. The paper is due in class on **Tuesday, February 19**.
  - The second short paper will focus on the struggle for racial and gender equality. For the second short paper students can use ideas from Du Bois, King, Butler, Zinn (texts covered after the first paper's due date), and West. The second short paper is due in class on **Tuesday, March 19**.
- Final Paper: 30%
  - Your final paper will be a substantial revision of one of your short papers. It will not only expand on your previous argument, but also incorporate the work of Paul Krugman, Noam Chomsky, or Cornel West. We will discuss this assignment in more detail later in the semester. The final paper will be at least 1,500 words, but no more than 2,000 words. **The final paper is due via Blackboard on May 14 no later than 5:00 pm.**
- Late Work
  - All work turned in late will be penalized one fraction of a letter grade for each day it is late; i.e. one day late moved what would have been an A to an A-. I do not grant extensions except in emergency situations. Notify me as soon as possible by email if you will not be able to submit your work on time so that I can consider the circumstances and decide whether an extension is appropriate.

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or “cheating” in any form is absolutely unacceptable. Plagiarized assignments will receive no credit and students who plagiarize may fail the course and be subject to Temple University sanctions as defined by the “Temple University Student Code of Conduct.” See <http://policies.temple.edu> (policy number 03.70.12) for further reference.

### Disability Statement

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities Statement

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02).

### Course Catalog Information

Course Number: PHIL 0824; Section: 001; CRN: 5093

### Course Calendar

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#### Week One: Jan 22, 24

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Tuesday Course Introduction

- Thursday
- “Tyranny is Tyranny” (Ch. 4 of *A People’s History of the United States*), Howard Zinn (ER)
  - The Declaration of Independence (BB)

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#### Week Two: Jan 29, 31

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Tuesday

- “Self Reliance,” Ralph Waldo Emerson (ER)
- “Civil Disobedience,” Henry David Thoreau (ER)

- Thursday
- Chapter 7, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass (ER)
  - “The Nature of Slavery,” “Inhumanity of Slavery,” and “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” from *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Frederick Douglass (ER)

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#### Week Three: Feb 5, 7

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Tuesday

- Chapters 16-18, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Frederick Douglass (ER)
- Presentation (A): “Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom” (Ch. 9), Zinn (ER)

Thursday • *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ch. 1 and 2

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**Week Four: Feb 12, 14**


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- Tuesday
- Ch. 3 and 7, Du Bois
  - Presentation (B): “The Socialist Challenge” (Ch. 13), Zinn (ER)

- Thursday
- Ch. 10 and 14, Du Bois
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**Week Five: Feb 19, 21**


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- Tuesday
- **First short paper due in class**
  - *A Testament of Hope* (First half - up to “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”), Martin Luther King, Jr. (BB)
  - Presentation (C): “Or Does It Explode?” (Ch. 17), Zinn (ER)

- Thursday
- *A Testament of Hope* (Second half), Martin Luther King, Jr. (BB)
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**Week Six: Feb 26, 28**


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- Tuesday
- Preface to the 1999 and the 1990 editions of *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (BB)
  - Presentation (D): “The Intimately Oppressed” (Ch. 6) Zinn (ER)

- Thursday
- “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (Ch. One of *Gender Trouble*), Butler (BB)
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**Week Seven: March 5, 7**


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- Tuesday
- “From Parody to Politics” (Conclusion to *Gender Trouble*), Butler (BB)
  - Presentation (E): “Black Sexuality: The Taboo Subject” (Ch. 7 of *Race Matters*), Cornel West (ER)

- Thursday
- “The Question of Social Transformation,” Butler (BB)
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**Week Eight: March 12, 14 No Classes**


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**Week Nine: March 19, 21**


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- Tuesday
- **Second short paper due in class**
  - *The Conscience of a Liberal*, Krugman, Introduction and Ch. 1
  - Presentation (A): Ch. 2, Krugman

- Thursday
- Ch. 3, 4, Krugman
  - Presentation (B): Ch. 5, Krugman
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**Week Ten: March 26, 28**


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- Tuesday
- Ch. 6 and 7, Krugman
  - Presentation (C): Ch. 8, Krugman

- Thursday
- Ch. 9, 10 Krugman
  - Presentation (D): Ch. 11, Krugman
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**Week Eleven: April 2, 4**

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Tuesday • Ch. 12, 13, Krugman

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Thursday • *Hegemony or Survival*, Noam Chomsky, Ch. 1 and 2  
 • Presentation (E): Ch. 3, Chomsky

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**Week Twelve: April 9, 11**

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Tuesday • Ch. 4, Chomsky  
 • Presentation (A): Kristol *The War Over Iraq*, Ch. 7-8 (BB)

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Thursday • Ch. 5, Chomsky  
 • Presentation (B): Kristol *The War Over Iraq*, Ch. 8-9 (BB)

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**Week Thirteen: April 16, 18**

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Tuesday • Ch. 6 and 7, Chomsky  
 • Presentation (C): Ch. 8, Chomsky

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Thursday • Ch. 9 and Afterword, Chomsky

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**Week Fourteen: April 23, 25**

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Tuesday • Chapters 1 and 2, *Democracy Matters*, Cornel West  
 • Presentation (D): “The Coming Revolt of the Guards,” Zinn (ER)

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Thursday • Chapter 3, West  
 • Presentation (E): “The 2000 Election and the ‘War on Terrorism’” (Ch. 25), Zinn (ER)

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**Week Fifteen: April 30, May 2**

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Tuesday • Chapter 5, West

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Thursday • Chapter 7, West

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