

VIRTUE AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC
HIS 39AB, Section 14 (39699) • PHI 39AA, Section 01 (39992) • PSC 39AH, Section 01 (39705)
T/Th, 12:30-1:45, 210 Central Classroom Bldg. • Spring 2020

Dr. Shelby M. Balik
sbalik@msudenver.edu

office: 211 Central Classroom
office hours: T/Th, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.,
2:00-3:00 p.m., or by appt.

The nation's founders wrote much of virtue and its role in preserving the nation and protecting American interests. They did not invent the idea, however; writers and speakers spanning over two thousand years have examined the concept of virtue and how it defined citizenship and shaped relationships between governors and the governed. During the revolutionary era and beyond, their ideas informed American republicanism, the democratic ideal, and citizens' movements that have sought to put abstract concepts of liberty and virtue into action. This course, which is offered in partnership with the Hart Center for Public Service, explores why and how the nation's founders sought to interweave the concept of virtue with the (contested) ideals of American republicanism, and how these ideals have informed changes in politics and philosophy throughout American history. We will examine republican thought from a range of perspectives, and we will explore the changing roles of civic duty and participation within the idealized republic, as well as the challenges and obstacles that have shaped and reshaped these ideas over time. The seminar will feature both scholarly and applied components. Along with readings and discussions, we will talk with guest speakers who have been trailblazers charting new courses in public service, and students will investigate opportunities for civic engagement in the public and nonprofit sectors. Through these different components of the course, we will shed light on such questions as the meaning of citizenship, the relationship between a government and its people, and the contours of rights, liberties, and civic responsibility within a republic.

Required Readings: The following books will be available at the Auraria Bookstore (bargain-hunters should also try the selection of used books on Amazon.com and Bookfinder.com, but make sure you get the right editions when applicable). I have also placed copies on reserve at the library.

David Cole, *Engines of Liberty: How Citizen Movements Succeed* (2017)
Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (1997)
Eric Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution* (2019)
Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (revised edition, 2017)
Gerald Leonard and Saul Cornell, *The Partisan Republic: Democracy, Exclusion, and the Fall of the Founders' Constitution, 1780s-1830s* (2019)

There will also be required short readings (such as articles, book chapters, and primary documents) that I will post on Blackboard as links and pdfs. These readings will be denoted with an asterisk (*) in the weekly schedule of assignments that follows.

Assignments and Grading: The course requirements and their value toward your grade are as follows. *You must complete all of these components in order to pass.*

Attendance/participation: 20%
Discussion starters (ten total): 10%
Response papers (three total): 20%

Preliminary final project components: 20%
Final project: 30%

Attendance and participation: I expect regular attendance and will take roll. Everyone is allowed two "byes" – an unexplained absence – in the class. After that, any absences – except in the case of legitimate and

documented emergencies, medical or otherwise – will detract from the attendance/participation portion of your grade. You are responsible for making up the work you miss during any absence, excused or otherwise. Classes will consist mostly of discussion, with some short lectures, student presentations, and talks by visiting speakers. Your level of preparation and participation will both improve the quality of class meetings and boost your participation grade. It should go without saying (but often doesn't) that when you attend class, you will refrain from disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) talking amongst yourselves, reading the newspaper, or text messaging. **Please silence all electronic devices before you enter the classroom and use them only when necessary for the purposes of the class.**

Discussion starters: To help generate better in-class discussions, each student will submit **ten** “discussion starters” over the course of the semester. These assignments are very short and informal will be graded on a \checkmark , \checkmark^- , \checkmark^+ basis. To complete these assignments, you should *email me* with *three* insights, responses, or questions about the readings we are scheduled to discuss in class (cite the readings you're referencing so that I know exactly what you're responding to). The point of the assignments is to help you engage the readings more closely, and also to help us make better use of discussions during class. I will use your discussion starters to address misunderstandings or questions, introduce your observations, and raise pertinent questions. In other words, this is a way for you to contribute to class discussion. But in order for these assignments to work, they need to be completed well before class time. Therefore, they will be due *by 6:00 p.m. on the night prior to our class discussions of the assigned readings*. That will give me time to incorporate your thoughts into my discussion plan. To ensure that we have an even distribution of discussion starters throughout the semester, you are required to submit at least five of these assignments prior to spring break.

Response papers: To delve into the readings more closely, each student will write **three** (2-3-page) response papers over the course of the semester. Each response paper should take up some substantial portion of the week's readings. In other words, if the week's readings include a section of a book and some shorter readings (an article, some documents, etc.), you might focus on the book, pair a chapter with a relevant document, write about how some of the documents relate to each other, and so on. You have some flexibility, but you should cover a substantial portion of the readings. These are not formal papers, and they need not be structured around an argument or an interpretation. Rather, you should pick out a main argument or theme in the readings and explore it. You can assess its validity, show how different readings confront the same ideas, relate the main argument of theme in the readings to the class, or even examine the value of the reading in terms of the class's goals. You should show evidence of careful reading by using concrete evidence and examples (include citations), and I will grade the papers based on how well you do that, but you need not conform to the standard formula for developing a historical argument. You should, however, focus on producing well-written and thoughtful pieces that engage the readings directly and concretely. You can choose when you write these papers, but you must write one before spring break, and one afterward. All papers are due on the Thursday of the week you are writing (in other words, the end of the week when the readings are assigned), in hard copy *and* on Blackboard.

Final project: Because this course has both theoretical and applied emphases, you will complete a final project that interweaves elements of both. The final project will be a prospectus for a civic engagement project in the public or nonprofit sector. You could propose an internship, a program that an existing government or nonprofit agency could adopt, or you could propose an entirely new kind of organization to address unmet needs. To make this a project of manageable scope, you should design a project that will address a need in the Denver metro area (or in the state of Colorado). There will be a series of preliminary assignments designed to help you develop the plan, followed by an extensive proposal. The sequence of assignments will be as follows:

Preliminary final project components:

- A brief proposal for the project. This should be 1-2 paragraphs long. In this mini-proposal, you should identify the problem or need in the community that you aim to solve, identify any groups or government agencies that are already working to address the problem, and explain how your plan could add something new or meet a different need. You should also list experts you might interview. This assignment should be submitted *by email* by February 14.
- A transcribed interview with an expert in a relevant field. Experts might include policymakers, lawyers (who focus on pertinent areas of law – ACLU lawyers for a civil rights project, for example), nonprofit workers, other professionals, or activists. This part of the project will take time and preparation, so make sure you pace yourself. You'll need to research your expert's area of work, their organization's mission, and the nature of the problem the expert hopes to solve. You will also need to prepare questions in advance and make sure you have a recording device for the interview (along with a means to take notes), and you'll need time to transcribe the interview. Plan for an interview that takes between 30-60 minutes. It would be a very nice idea to send your interviewee a thank-you note afterwards, too (but that won't be part of the grade). This transcript should be submitted as a hard copy in class and on Blackboard on March 5.
- An annotated bibliography of books, scholarly articles, and news articles that will inform your project proposal. This bibliography should include at least five sources. Your annotations should explain how each source helps explain the nature of the problem you are trying to address or the solution you are proposing. This bibliography should be submitted as a hard copy and on Blackboard on March 19.

Prospectus: Imagine that this is a proposal for grants or other funding sources, and you are trying to “sell” your project. In other words, you want to make the case for need, feasibility, and impact. You should compose your final project with those goals in mind. This project should be turned in as a *hard copy* at our final meeting (during finals week) and posted on Blackboard by that date, regardless of when you present your work. All proposals should include the following:

- A rationale (4-5 pages) in which you identify the problem you seek to address, explore its history and context, and briefly propose the project, organization, or activity that you have designed. In this rationale, you should use both the readings you have identified in your annotated bibliography and excerpts from the interview you conducted to supply context and evidence. You can also note the historical, philosophical, and/or political underpinnings of the project. How does this project advance the cause of civic virtue and engagement?
- A plan (page lengths will vary) in which you lay out how you will achieve your goals. The contents of this section will depend on the nature of the project, but you might think about the following questions: will this project be an independent undertaking, or will it happen under the auspices of an existing organization? Are there community partnerships that can help you accomplish your goals? What will be the central activities you will sponsor or services you will provide? How do you propose to raise funds? How will you recruit staffers, experts, or others to assist in your efforts, and what will their jobs be? How do you envision the short- and long-term impact of this project?
- Oral presentation: In the final class meetings (and during our final exam time slot), students will present their proposals and discuss each other's work. These presentations are a required component of the final project (that includes attendance on your classmates' presentation days).

Policies:

Deadlines: All papers are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. Late work will be graded down one-third of a grade (A to A-, etc.) for every day they are late, starting after the beginning of class. Papers will not be accepted late or via e-mail, except with a valid excuse (medical or family emergency, etc.) AND prior approval from me.

Special Needs: Students who need accommodations – for disability, religious observance, military service, or any other reason – should let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Cheating and plagiarism: Either offense is grounds for a zero on the assignment and failure in the course. If you are unsure of what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, I strongly encourage you to check with me *before* you hand in your assignment. Please also note that any student who cannot or will not produce the notes, outlines, and other preparatory work for his or her paper will be considered guilty of cheating or plagiarism and subject to the same penalties. The policy in this class is quite simple and is as follows. In the first documented instance of academic dishonesty (as described in the University guidelines, linked below), the student will receive a zero on the assignment. In the second instance, the student will fail the class. All code of conduct violations will be reported.

Metro State's Academic Integrity Statement: "As students, faculty, staff and administrators of Metropolitan State University of Denver, it is our responsibility to uphold and maintain an academic environment that furthers scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge. We will not tolerate academic dishonesty. We will demonstrate honesty and integrity in all activities related to our learning and scholarship. We will not plagiarize, fabricate information or data, cheat on tests or exams, steal academic material, or submit work to more than one class without full disclosure."

For more information on academic dishonesty, see

<https://www.msudenver.edu/deanofstudents/studentconduct/academicintegrity/academicdishonesty/>

For more information, please see the information on LAS policies and deadlines posted in the "Syllabus and Policies" folder on Blackboard.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available in the “Assigned Readings” folder on Blackboard.

WEEK ONE: January 21-24

- Readings: * Plato, *The Republic* (375 BCE), book 4
* Bible verses on virtue
* John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630)
* George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796)
* John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address (1961)

January 21: Introductions

January 23: What are we talking about when we talk about virtue?

WEEK TWO: January 27-31

- Readings: Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, Introduction, Part I (chapters 1-5)
* Aristotle, *Politics* (350 BCE), selections
* Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)* (44 BCE), selections
* Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (1517), selections
* English Bill of Rights (1689)
* John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), selections
* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1763), selections

January 28: Ancient and early modern antecedents

January 30: The Enlightenment, natural rights, and citizenship

WEEK THREE: February 3-7

- Readings: Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, chapters 6-7
* George Whitefield, *The Great Duty of Family Religion* (1739)
* Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), selections
* Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791), selections
* Sources on the reading habits of eighteenth-century Americans
* UCLA Center for Oral History Interviewing Guidelines (We can discuss this in class on Thursday, when we discuss your final projects, but I’m posting it as a reference as you start to think about your interview.)

February 4: Civic engagement, private virtue, and public order in the colonial era

February 6: Discussion of final project ideas

WEEK FOUR: February 10-14

Readings: Leonard and Cornell, *The Partisan Republic*, Introduction and chapters 1-2

- * Virginia Resolves (1765)
- * Brutus, "To the Free and Loyal Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New-York" (1770)
- * Letters between Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Galloway (1774-5)
- * Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1775), selections
- * Declaration of Independence (1776)
- * Review (skim) docs for discussion on competing visions of the republic and bring them to class on Thursday (we will look at them more closely in class).

February 11: Guest speakers: Alyssa Marks and Elizabeth Parmelee, MSU-Denver Center for Civic Engagement

Virtue, citizenship, and the rotten state in the Revolutionary era

February 13: A revolution for whom?

***** SUBMIT PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PROJECT BY EMAIL BY FEBRUARY 14. *****

WEEK FIVE: February 17-21

Readings: Leonard and Cornell, *The Partisan Republic*, chapters 3-4

- * Andy Trees, "John Adams and the Problem of Virtue," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21 (2001): 393-412
- * Seth Cotlar, "'Every Man Should Have Property': Robert Coram and the American Revolution's Legacy of Economic Populism," from Young, *Revolutionary Founders*
- * Sheila Skemp, "America's Mary Wollstonecraft: Judith Sargent Murray's Case for the Equal Rights of Women," from Young, et al., *Revolutionary Founders*
- * Federalist papers (pro-ratification) – skim the contents of this folder
- * Anti-federalist papers (against ratification) – skim the contents of this folder
- * United States Constitution
- * Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes" (1790)
- * Partisan propaganda (images ca. 1790s)

February 18: Natural aristocracy

February 20: A crisis of virtue and a design for republicanism

WEEK SIX: February 24-28

Readings: Leonard and Cornell, *The Partisan Republic*, chapters 5-6, Conclusion

- * The Constitution of the Cherokee Nation
- * Andrew Jackson on Cherokee Removal
- * The Declaration of Sentiments (American Antislavery Society, 1833)
- * *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857)
- * The Declaration of Sentiments (Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, 1848)
- * Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Early America." *Signs* 13 (1987): 37-58

February 25: Democracy, citizenship, and race

February 27: Democracy, citizenship, and gender

WEEK SEVEN: March 2-6

Readings: Foner, *The Second Founding*, Preface, Introduction and chapter 1

- * Angelina Grimké, “Human Rights Not Founded on Sex” (1834)
- * Sarage, “On Wage Slavery,” *Philadelphia National Laborer* (1836)
- * David Walker’s *Appeal* (1829)

March 3: Liberty to freedom

March 5: Citizens’ movements in the nineteenth century

***** TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR FINAL PROJECT DUE ON MARCH 5. *****

WEEK EIGHT: March 9-13

Readings: Foner, *The Second Founding*, chapters 2-3

Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, chapters 8-10

- * “An Address to the People of Rhode Island, from the Convention assembled at Providence ... to Promote the Establishment of a State Constitution” (1834)
- * Robert Purvis, “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disenfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania” (1838)
- * “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” (1779)
- * Benjamin Rush, *Thoughts Upon Female Education* (1787)
- * Horace Mann, “The Necessity of Education in a Republican Government” (1839)

March 10: Reconfiguring democracy: the right to vote

March 12: Reconfiguring democracy: education

WEEK NINE: March 16-20

Readings: Foner, chapter 4, Epilogue

Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, Preface, Introduction, chapters 1-2

- * Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852), excerpts
- * Alexander Stephens, Cornerstone Speech (1861)
- * Abraham Lincoln, The Gettysburg Address (1863)
- * Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)
- * “Civil War” Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th)
- * Reconstruction documents: Freedmen’s petition to Andrew Johnson (1865), Mississippi Black Code (1865), sharecroppers’ contract (1866)

March 17: Reconfiguring citizenship: The Civil War

March 19: Guest speaker: Denver Mayor Michael Hancock

***** ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL PROJECT DUE ON MARCH 19. *****

WEEK TEN: March 23-27 – No Class (Spring Break)

WEEK ELEVEN: March 30 - April 3

Readings: Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, chapters 3-5

- * Ira Steward, Second Declaration of Independence (1879)
- * Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self" (1892)
- * Richard Pratt, speech to the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction (1892)
- * The Congressional debate over the 1924 National Origins Act (two links)
- * Hiram Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism" (1926)

March 31: Contesting citizenship and civic virtue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

April 2: Guest speaker: Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser

WEEK TWELVE: April 6-10

Readings: Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, chapters 6-7

- * John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (Summer 1985): 223-51
- * Zehra F. Arat, "Human Rights and Democracy: Expanding or Contracting?" *Polity* 32 (1999): 119-44
- * Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (2007), excerpts

April 7: Guest Speaker: Billy Shore, founder and CEO, Share Our Strength

April 9: Taking stock of rights: the shift from natural rights to civil rights to human rights

WEEK THIRTEEN: April 13-17

Readings: Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, chapters 8-11, Conclusion

- * Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960), selections
- * Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)
- * Black Panther Party Platform (1966)
- * Shirley Chisolm, *Unbought and Unbossed* (1970), selections
- * Rep. Margaret M. Heckler (R-MA), Statement before the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments (1970)

April 14: Twentieth-century citizens' movements

April 16: How do the left and right define "the people"?

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 20-24

Readings: Cole, *Engines of Liberty*, Introduction and **one part** of the book (we will assign parts as the date gets closer)

- * William J. Barber III and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Fear and Resentment* (2016), selections
- * Jill Lepore, *The Whites of their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (2011), selections
- * Jaskiran Dhillon, "Indigenous Youth Are Building a Climate Justice Movement by Targeting Colonialism," *Truthout* (June 2016)

April 21: Contemporary citizens' movements

April 23: The anatomy of a movement: the nuts and bolts of civic engagement

WEEK FIFTEEN: April 27 - May 1

Readings: Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, Part III

- * Gary Hart, "The Republic of Conscience: A Manifesto," from *A Republic of Conscience* (2015)
- * Shelly Burt, "The Good Citizen's Psyche" On the Psychology of Civic Virtue," *Polity* 23 (1990): 23-38
- * Brennan, Jason. "For-Profit Business as Civic Virtue." *Journal of Business Ethics* 106 (2012): 313-24

April 28: Civic engagement in the twenty-first century: what is virtue?

April 30: Whither the republic?

WEEK SIXTEEN: May 4-8

Readings: None.

May 5: Final presentations

May 7: Final presentations

***** FINAL MEETING (DURING EXAM WEEK): DATE AND TIME TBA (PROBABLY THURSDAY, MAY 14, 12:30 P.M. *****

• We will not have a final exam but instead will finish the final presentations during this time.