

**Trending to the Right: The Evolution of American Politics since the 1960s****(Prof.) Tom Weisskopf****Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM****Tyler 122, East Quad****COURSE DESCRIPTION**

By worldwide standards the Left has never been very strong in the United States, but in the 1960s the political pendulum appeared to be shifting to the Left. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations pursued policies that sought to enhance the role of the state in improving the lot of the less fortunate and in protecting people from adverse effects of market forces. Moreover, a variety of non-governmental movements gained strength as they sought to combat evils perceived to characterize American capitalism – such as poverty, racism, sexism, militarism, and environmental deterioration. Since the 1960s, however, the trend in U.S. politics has been unmistakably to the Right. Both of the major parties have espoused policies that reduce the role of the state, that give more play to the free market, and that call upon individuals to take more responsibility for their own fate. Moreover, Left-wing social and political movements are weaker and less influential than in the past.

In this seminar we will seek to understand some of the key forces that have accompanied and may well have contributed to this major shift in the U.S. political climate. We will consider trends and developments over the past five decades in a variety of spheres that arguably have an important influence on U.S. politics – such as accelerating globalization, rising concentration of media ownership, and changing religious practices across the United States. We will also examine the growth of a variety of powerful Right-wing movements. Like all RC first-year seminars, this one will involve a substantial amount of reading, discussion and – most importantly – writing.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Course topics and required readings for each course session are listed below. The required readings will be found either in the books listed below (available at the Shaman Drum Bookstore, 313 South State) or in the course-pack (available at Excel, 1117 South University). Some additional recommended readings will be made available on-line.

John Micklethwait & Adrian Wooldridge (M&W), The Right Nation (2005)

Paul Krugman (PK), The Conscience of a Liberal (2007)

Mickey Edwards (ME), Reclaiming Conservatism (2008)

I strongly urge you to buy The Right Nation and the course-pack. I also strongly recommend that you buy one or both of the other two books listed above. We will read parts of each of them – somewhat more from Krugman than from Edwards. For those of you who don't buy one or the other of the two books, I will make available in a course-pack supplement the parts of each book that will be required reading. A copy of every book on the course reading list, as well as a copy of the course-pack, will also be on reserve at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library.

The due dates for the six papers to be assigned in this seminar are included in the syllabus below; paper topics and related details will be distributed in class.

### **SYLLABUS AND READING LIST**

**September 2: Introduction**

**September 4: The "Right Nation"**

M&W, The Right Nation, introduction (pp. 5-24).  
PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, chapter 1 (pp. 3-14).  
ME, Reclaiming Conservatism, part of chapter I (pp. 3-17).

*Paper # 1 due prior to class on September 9.*

**September 9: Conservative Values**

Barry Goldwater, The Conscience of a Conservative, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-15).  
ME, Reclaiming Conservatism, part of chapter III (pp. 111-137).

**September 11: The Liberal Era in U.S. Politics**

PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 37-78).

**September 16: Stirrings on the Right**

M&W, The Right Nation, chapter 2 (pp. 40-62).  
ME, Reclaiming Conservatism, part of chapter I (pp. 17-31).

**September 18: The 1960s: Hope**

M.J. Heale, The Sixties in America (2001), chapters 1 and 3 (pp. 11-26, 51-69).  
PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, part of chapter 5 (pp. 79-86).

*Paper # 2 due prior to class on September 23.*

**September 23:           The 1960s: Strife**

M&W, The Right Nation, part of chapter 3 (pp. 63-68).

M.J. Heale, The Sixties in America (2001), chapter 5 & conclusion (pp. 90-107, 155-159)

PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, part of chapter 5 (pp. 87-100).

**September 25:           The 1970s: The Reddening of America**

M&W, The Right Nation, part of chapter 3 (pp. 68-71).

Bruce Shulman, The Seventies (2001), chapters 1 and 4 (pp. 23-52, 102-117).

**September 30:           The 1970s: The Rise of a New Right**

M&W, The Right Nation, part of chapter 3 (pp. 71-89).

Bruce Shulman, The Seventies (2001), chapter 8 (pp. 193-217).

**October 2:                The 1980s: The Conservative Transformation**

M&W, The Right Nation, part of chapter 3 (pp. 89-93).

ME, Reclaiming Conservatism, part of chapter I (pp. 31-59).

*Paper # 3 due prior to class on October 7.*

**October 7:                The 1980s: The "Great Divergence"**

PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, chapter 7 (pp. 124-152).

**October 9:                The 1990s: Clinton and the Right**

M&W, The Right Nation, chapter 4 (pp. 94-128).

**October 14:              Movement Conservatism**

PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, chapter 8 and part of chapter 9 (pp. 153-183).

**October 16:              George W. Bush and the Battle of Ideas**

M&W, The Right Nation, parts of chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 131-134, 139-171).

**October 23:              In-class film.**

*No readings for this week; one-on-one meetings to discuss your writing.*

*Paper # 4 due prior to class on October 28.*

**October 28:           The Grass Roots of the Right**

M&W, The Right Nation, chapter 7 (pp. 172-197).

**October 30:           Radicalized Religion**

Kevin Phillips, American Theocracy (2006), chapter 4 (pp. 99-124).

Garry Wills, excerpt from "A Country Ruled By Faith," New York Review of Books, Vol. 53, No. 18 (Nov. 16, 2006).

**November 4:           With God on Our Side**

Kevin Phillips, American Theocracy (2006), part of chapter 6 (pp. 171-197).

Barbara Ehrenreich, excerpt from "The Faith Factor," The Nation (Nov. 29, 2004).

Michael Lerner, excerpt from "The Democrats Needed and Need a Religious/Spiritual Left," Tikkun website: [www.Tikkun.org](http://www.Tikkun.org) (November 3, 2004).

**November 6:           Neoconservatism**

M&W, The Right Nation, Chapter 8 (pp. 198-224).

**November 11:         The Politics of the Media**

Robert McChesney, The Problem of the Media (2004), preface and chapter 1 (pp. 7-56).

**November 13:         Trends in U.S. Journalism**

Robert McChesney, The Problem of the Media (2004), chapter 2 (pp. 57-97).

Michael Massing, "The End of News" and "The Press: The Enemy Within," New York Review of Books 52,19 & 20 (Dec. 1 & 15, 2005).

*Paper # 5 due prior to class on November 18.*

**November 18:         Anti-Intellectualism**

Susan Jacoby, The Age of American Unreason (2008), chapter 1 and part of chapter 11 (pp. 3-30, 279-287).

**November 20:         The Culture of Distraction**

Al Gore, The Assault on Reason (2007), introduction (pp. 1-22).

Susan Jacoby, The Age of American Unreason (2008), part of chapter 10 (pp. 242-247, 262-270).

**November 25: American Exceptionalism**

M&W, The Right Nation, chapters 12 and 13 and part of chapter 14 (pp. 291-333 and 339-343).

**December 2: Reclaiming Conservatism**

ME, Reclaiming Conservatism, chapter IV (pp. 159-185).

**December 4: Reasserting Liberalism**

PK, The Conscience of a Liberal, chapters 12-13 (pp. 244-273).

*Paper # 6 due prior to class on December 9.*

**December 9: Concluding observations**

*No readings for this week; final class session.*