

CSS161: AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY AND AMERICAN CULTURE

SUMMER 2023

SESSION 2



TUFTS UNIVERSITY
Philosophy Department Presents

Course Description

The Philosophy Department at Tufts University will offer to the students of Beijing Normal University a program entitled “American Philosophy and American Culture.” This course is a philosophical examination of some influential writings, extending from the colonial period up to the present, which show the emergence in America of an increasingly secular and egalitarian view of the world built on public reason. With a particular focus on conceptions of justice, toleration, and liberty in American political life, the course begins with an exploration of founding American political documents. The course then uses these documents as a lens to view and discuss issues of inequality, such as slavery and suffrage. The course concludes with an examination of more recent work by political philosopher John Rawls, and range of responses to Rawls made in the spirit of the American philosophical tradition.

Objectives

- To become acquainted with major themes in American religious, political and philosophical culture through a close reading of primary texts and historical sources
- To attain familiarity with contemporary American philosophy and culture through lectures, multimedia presentations, and academic excursions
- To understand the intellectual history of American attention to the virtues of self-reliance, toleration, and pragmatism

Writings (Topics and Readings Subject to Change)

Week 1-American Government	John Winthrop: General Considerations for the Plantation in New England
	Benjamin Franklin: Experiments and Observations on Electricity
	John Locke: Letter Concerning Toleration, and Second Treatise of Government
	Thomas Paine: The Age of Reason
	Declaration of Independence
	Letters between George Berkeley and Samuel Johnson
	Letters between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson
	Thomas Jefferson: Notes on the State of Virginia
	The Federalist Papers
Week 2-Social Issues	Asa Gray: Natural Selection not Inconsistent with Natural Theology
	Henry David Thoreau: Walden, and Resistance to Civil Government
	Ralph Waldo Emerson: Nature, and the Divinity School Address
	John Dewey, Humanist Manifesto
	Martin Luther King: Letter from Birmingham Jail
	Alison Jaggar, Feminist Politics and Human Nature
Week 3-Contemporary Political Philosophy	John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (excerpts) and Political Liberalism
	Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia
	Michael Sandel, Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?
	Martha Nussbaum, Frontiers of Justice

BNU Summer Course Field Trips (Video Tours)

Week 1: Monday, July 24 – Friday, July 28	Mass State House
	Adams National Historical Park, Quincy, MA (the home of John Adams)
	Newport, RI (sites related to George Berkeley) 1. Trinity Church 2. Whitehall tour
Week 2: Monday, July 31 – Friday, August 4	Concord, MA 1. Old Manse/Concord river walk 2. North Bridge/Visitor Center 3. Concord Museum walking tour of Concord 4. Tour of Concord Museum ed center 5. Cemetery 6. Pond with Reenactor
Week 3: Monday, August 7 – Friday, August 11	Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA: Home of William James
	Mt. Auburn cemetery: Gravesites of William James, John Rawls, Robert Nozick
	Martin Luther King: Exhibition at Boston University

American Philosophy and American Culture

Summer Course (Session 2)
Tufts University & Beijing Normal University
Monday through Friday, 9 am – 12 noon BJT
(90 min face-to-face + 90 min async)
July 24 to August 11, 2023