COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this seminar is to understand fundamental themes of American political thought by exploring the dominant American ethos and the critiques of it. Questions to be considered are: what is covenantal republicanism, what is its relation to the form of American government and to the protection of individual rights, what is capitalism and what form does it take in the United States, and how has the dominant American ethos been extended and critiqued by major intellectual and political movements in American history including the Anti-Federalists, Transcendentalism, Populism, Progressivism, and African American Political Thought.

GRADING:

Class Participation: 25%
Midterm Paper: 35%
Final Paper: 40%

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY and DISABILITIES

All students are expected to be aware of and abide by Yeshiva University’s academic honesty policy. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrative material, or statements of someone else, without full and proper acknowledgment, and presenting them as one’s own. Please just simply remember to cite your work.

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, rkoen1@yu.edu during the first week of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, contact me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.
READINGS

Introduction: Covenantal Republicanism

January 24th: Covenantal Republican Capitalism

Thomas Jefferson et al: Declaration of Independence
Abraham Lincoln: Gettysburg Address

Part 1: The Anti-Federalist Legacy and the Dynamics of Capitalism

January 31st


Angelo Codavilla: “America’s Ruling Class - And the Peril’s of Revolution” from the *American Spectator*.

February 7th


Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*: 11, 12, 57

Part 2: American Transcendentalism

February 21

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (selections)
Kathryn Schulz, “Pond Scum” in *The New Yorker*

February 28th

Emerson, “Self-Reliance"
Whitman, “Democratic Vistas” (selections)

Part 3: Popular Sovereignty and the Lincoln-Douglas Debate

March 7th

Harvey Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided* (University of Chicago Press), selections
Lincoln-Douglas Debates, selections

Part 4: The Gilded Age of the Commercial Republic

March 14: Populism


March 21st: Pragmatism (1)

William James, *Pragmatism* (Selections)

March 28th: Pragmatism (2)

John Dewey, selections from “Ethics of Democracy”, “I believe” and “Liberalism and Social Action”

**Part 5: African American Political Thought**

April 4th:

James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem” and “East River, Downtown: Postscript to a letter from Harlem”

April 25th:

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel and Grau, 2015)
Martin Luther King, Jr. “I have a Dream”

**Part 6: Covenantal Republicanism, a return**

May 2nd (TBD)


May 9th:

Lincoln, *Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions*
Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address*