

Aesthetics, Values, & Authority:  
***Inventing America***  
The Honors College, Florida International University  
IDH 3035-U22 (12398)  
Spring 2018 Tuesdays and Thursdays: 2:00-3:15 PM  
January 8 – April 21  
Classroom: GC 275A

**Instructor**

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Office hours: by appointment, DM 383C

**Overview**

Since the inception of the United States, the concept of what it means to be an American has been contested. In the fall semester, we explored some of the core tenets of Americanism: freedom of speech and religion, exceptionalism, the American Dream, the great melting pot. In the spring, we will explore the very foundations of our republic: The Constitution.

Not since ancient Athens and Rome had the world seen the form of government that was born in the U.S. after the war of independence. In this semester, we will travel back in time to the constitutional convention of 1787 and possibly rewrite history. We will explore, at length, the values that make up our “American” identity and how these values are reflected in the type of government that we ultimately create. Through role-playing and experiential learning, we will explore the many-sided aspects of human nature and the multiple perspectives one can take on its development. In the end, we will literally be inventing America.

**Course Objectives/Outcomes:**

- Students will gain an understanding of the various filters through which they understand themselves, others, and the interconnected histories of different peoples.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the individuals have in shaping history and social structure.
- Students will gain insight into the authority of visuals, artifacts, and maps—or the lack of in—their understanding or misunderstanding of history, politics and culture.
- Students will learn to recognize the influence of Western values on how they perceive themselves and others.
- Students will be willing to engage in discussion that includes salient analysis and debate.

**Required Texts**

Coby, J. 2018. *The Constitutional Convention of 1787: Constructing the American Republic*. New York: W.W. Norton | ISBN: 978-0-939-64090-8

**Required Readings (PDFs will be provided on BlackBoard)**

*Check BlackBoard*

**Attendance/Classroom Etiquette**

Class attendance is mandatory, this course is heavily reliant on student participation and interaction. Failure to attend class on a regular basis will deprive students of the needed context from which to understand the readings and assignments. It is the student’s responsibility to check with his/her peers

regarding missed work or discussions. It is not the responsibility of the professor to repeat lessons or announcements to students who missed class time.

There will be no make-ups for missed work. Students are responsible for all material presented and all announcements made in class. Students are expected to read all emails sent by the professor and it will be assumed that the student is aware of all material and calendar changes and other messages communicated through email. Do not email the professor asking, "what did I miss?" Such queries do not merit a response.

Students are expected to be engaged in class discussion and interactions; therefore, use of electronic devices of any sort should be limited during class time. Place phone on SILENT. The vibrate function can be just as distracting as the ringer function.

As a responsible adult, students may take calls, etc. but are asked to leave the room with making minimal interruption.

### **Course Assignments**

#### *Reacting Position (Issue) Papers*

Each character sheet will have **two** paper assignments. Students will be graded on how well they are able to argue the point of view they are asked to take. It is strongly advised that sources be used to back up points. The assigned text provides ample fodder, as does the role sheet with recommended readings. All papers must conform to the following regulations: typed, double-spaced, proofread, free of major grammatical errors, front and back printed, and stapled. Citations will follow standard APA style.

On the top, right-hand corner, include the following information: Full Name, Panther ID, Course & Section, Course Title, and the name of the assignment (or create a title).

#### *Making Proposals and Amendments*

All students are expected to proffer at least **two proposals** and at least **three amendments** (friendly or not).

#### *Speaking at the Convention*

All students are expected to give at least **two formal speeches** in front of the convention on any of the issues germane to the convention.

These speeches will need to be written and submitted to the professors before the start of the day's proceeding at which the student will give the speech.

#### *General Participation at the Convention*

All students are expected to be fully engaged in the business of the convention and expected to ask questions, from their seats, of those who are giving speeches, making proposals, or amendments. This means that students are expected to engage in dialogue about the "big ideas" surrounding whatever proposal or amendment is being proffered. Students who are found not to be engaged run the risk of losing voting rights, points, and possible expulsion from the convention. Students who fail to engage on a regular basis in debate and interaction will receive a lower participation grade.

#### *Final (Creative) Project: Creating a Zine, Inventing America from A-Z*

- Zines are amateur magazines that revolve around a specific topic and include such things as artwork, poetry, cartoons, editorials, and short stories. They feature images and ideas reflecting on unconventional ways of thinking and presenting materials.
  - Based on the topics discussed in class, create a fan zine that gives your definition of America(n) using each letter of the alphabet...from A-Z. While this will be done with paper, creative license is afforded and students can make their zine using whatever materials they choose.
  - Individuals will be assessed not only on novelty and creativity but also on their ability to integrate the course material into their final product.

### *In-Class Activities and Quizzes*

Unscheduled and unannounced. The student must be present to submit.

All written work must consistently adhere to an accepted style of formal writing, i.e. Chicago Manual of Style, MLA, APA, etc. Students are advised to carefully proofread *all* papers before submitting them. Students who need extra help with their writing should make use of the university's free tutoring services: *On-Campus Learning Center*: PC 247; *Online Learning Center*: w3.fiu.edu. All students must adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Honors College and Florida International University.

Assignments are due on the day indicated in this syllabus or as announced by the professor. No late assignments will be permitted. All assignments that are written are to be printed out and turned in during the class meeting on the day it is due. Assignments WILL NOT be accepted via email; DO NOT email papers, unless specifically instructed to do so.

### **Grading Scale**

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	D	F
93	89	85	80	75	70	65	60	55

### **Religious Observances**

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor *at the beginning of the semester* of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

### **Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges**

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, if you have not done so already.

### **Academic Misconduct Policy**

Registration in this course implies an acceptance of and compliance with the Honors College policies for students and the FIU Code of Academic Integrity. Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

FIU Code of Academic Integrity: <http://undergrad.fiu.edu/academic-integrity/index.html>

FIU Honors College Plagiarism Policy: <http://honors.fiu.edu/students/policies/#misconduct>

### **Student Portfolios**

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students' learning outcomes. The portfolio method allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. You will decide (with instructor consultation) what "artifacts" or assignments to include for consideration in your portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of the student learning outcomes.

Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment.

Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements.

### **Global Learning Objectives**

This course has been certified as meeting the university's Global Learning requirement. The course's major assignment, Oral History Project, satisfies all three of the Honors College Global Learning Objectives.

*Global Awareness:* Through your engagement in the oral history project, you will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape the diverse thinking of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.

*Global Perspective:* Through your engagement in the oral history project, you will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.

*Global Engagement:* Through your engagement in the oral history project, you will demonstrate a willingness to engage in evidence-based investigation in order to solve a global issue.

*Global Learning Co-Curricular Activity:* You will perform at least twenty hours of Community Service per academic year either through the Honors College service partnerships (Sweetwater, Overtown Youth Center, etc.) or through other community service projects and/or events. If you want to apply this service to your graduation portfolio, be sure to document your hours.

This syllabus and the following calendar are tentative and thus subject to change. Changes will be announced in class or by email sent to students' FIU address.

**COURSE CALENDAR (subject to change)**

*All dates are tentative and the instructor holds the right to change due dates and presentation dates, providing ample notice to students.*

<b>Class Meeting</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings/Assignments (Links on Blackboard)</b>
Tuesday Jan 09	Review of RTTP; hand out roles; delineate expectations	
Thursday Jan 11	Preparing for the Convention: Types of Regimes	<i>Readings:</i> Aristotle, p. 67-76; Paine, p. 103-108
Tuesday Jan 16	Preparing for the Convention: Country v. Court Republicanism	<i>Readings:</i> Brutus, p. 141-145; Tocqueville, p. 146-150
Thursday Jan 18	Preparing for the Convention: Clarifying Topics	<i>Readings:</i> Hume, p. 94-102;
Tuesday Jan 23	Preparing for the Convention: Power Corrupts and How to Separate It	<i>Readings:</i> Locke, p. 76-79; Montesquieu, p. 79-93; Madison, p. 131-141
Thursday Jan 25	Preparing for the Convention: Clarifying Topics	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Jan 30	Preparing for the Convention: Slavery and Hypocrisy	<i>Readings:</i> Jefferson, p. 108-111
Thursday Feb 01	Preparing for the Convention: Final Wrap-up	<i>Readings:</i> Adams, p. 111-130;
Tuesday Feb 06	<i>Convention Meeting:</i> Election of secretary/president pro tempore; House of Representatives and the character of the representatives (country v. court republicanism)	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Feb 08	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Feb 13	<i>Convention Meeting:</i> The Size of the Lower House	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Feb 15	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Feb 20	<i>Convention Meeting:</i> The Senate and the Mode of Election	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Feb 22	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Feb 27	<i>Convention Meeting:</i> State Suffrage in the Upper House	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Mar 01	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Mar 06	<i>Work on Projects</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Mar 08	<i>Convention Meeting:</i> Pass proposals (if none or few have been submitted)	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Mar 13	SPRING BREAK!!!	
Thursday Mar 15	SPRING BREAK!!!	

Tuesday Mar 20	<i>Convention Meeting: The Presidency, Terms of Office</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Mar 22	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Mar 27	<i>Convention Meeting: The Presidency, Re-eligibility</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Mar 29	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Apr 03	<i>Convention Meeting: The Presidency, Mode of Election</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Apr 05	<i>Debrief</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Apr 10	<i>Convention Meeting: Slavery, Importation</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Apr 12	<i>Convention Meeting: Slavery, Representation &amp; Taxation</i>	<i>Readings:</i>
Tuesday Apr 17	Final Vote of Convention on Final Draft of the Constitution	<i>Readings:</i>
Thursday Apr 19	<i>Presentation of Final Project (Creating a Zine: Inventing America from A-Z)</i>	<b><i>Due: Final Presentation of Creative Project</i></b>
Thursday Apr 23-27	<b>Final Week of Semester (No Meeting)</b>	

### **The American Creed by William Tyler Page (1917)**

I believe in the United States of America, as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon these principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.