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# *CIVICLL 2000: Can We Rule Ourselves?*

Spring 2026

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**Classroom Location:** Smith Lab 1076

**Meeting Day/Time:** Tuesday and Thursday, 12:45pm – 2:05pm

**Instructors:** Jacob Hall and James Hooks

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**Instructors' Offices and Office Hours:**

Prof. Jacob Hall: Smith Lab: 5081; Thursday 3:00 – 4:00pm

Prof. James Hooks: Smith Lab 5057A: Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00 pm

## **I. Course Description**

Effective self-government has been the historical exception rather than the rule. The framers of the United States Constitution were acutely aware of the fragility of experiments with self-government. This course seeks to sharpen students' awareness of that fragility by surveying arguments and case studies that informed the framing of the U.S. Constitution. The framers' understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the role of government in securing justice, did not emerge in a vacuum. They sought to apply lessons from history in the context of a rapidly globalizing world. This course will help students apply those lessons to the diverse world of the twenty-first century.

Throughout the semester, students will survey the origins, institutions, achievements and failures of efforts at self-government. They will use both primary and secondary sources to gain a fuller understanding of how notions of citizenship and justice have varied across time, culture, and historical context within the Western Tradition. The design of the course is inspired by and provides an updated version of the historically sweeping, inter-disciplinary survey courses that used to be a staple of general education programs in higher education. It is not a course in general cultural literacy, but it familiarizes students with basic problems that have preoccupied American political leaders and constitutional theorists from the founding era through to the present day.

## **II. Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

CIVICLL Learning Outcomes	Related Course Content
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<p>1. Appreciate and critically evaluate the primary texts and secondary sources necessary to understand the key ideas, events, individuals, debates, traditions, and developments that have shaped the American constitutional order, civic life, and society.</p>	<p>Students will learn that American ideas and institutions did not emerge in an arbitrary or capricious manner, but as a direct and detailed reflection on previous experiments with and arguments about self-government. Students will be exposed to primary texts from relevant periods, and secondary literature that synthesizes and interprets historical information. The course emphasizes breadth of knowledge, showing students how ideas interact and evolve between historical contexts. At the same time, the course familiarizes students with a bank of knowledge Americans once held in common, even as they disagreed on how it should be cashed out with regard to public policy and real-time decision-making.</p>
<p>2. Analyze their experiences, reasoning, and cultural assumptions against the accumulated wisdom of inherited traditions and texts, the successes and failures of historical case studies, and the best lessons from the behavioral, social, and natural sciences.</p>	<p>Students will learn to evaluate the project of self-rule as a task which concerns not merely our “selves” (reflecting personal preferences or local customs) nor necessarily, “ruling” (attaining and exercising power), but as a collective, inter-generational, cross-cultural effort to realize a common human capacity for participating in shared governance, as assessed in contrasting ways by theorists, leaders, and researchers.</p>
<p>3. Use a multi-disciplinary perspective to identify and evaluate historical antecedents of contemporary problems, real-world applications of theoretical claims, and the principled bases for practical courses of action within the pluralistic American polity.</p>	<p>Students will learn which historical case studies have been especially important to American leaders and why; consider how practical reality has informed principled theorizing; examine how illiberal or preliberal political orders have managed social pluralism.</p>

### **III. Course Materials**

All course materials will be available on CarmenCanvas.

### **IV. Assignments and Grading**

The final grade will be calculated as follows:



- Participation and Attendance — 20%
  - Mid-Term Assessment Sequence 1 (Exam, Reflection Paper, Discussion) — 30%
  - Mid-Term Assessment Sequence 2 (Reflection Paper, Discussion) — 20%
  - Final Exam — 30%
1. Participation and Attendance — 20%
    - a. Students are expected to attend every class session. For each unexcused absence from class, students will be docked 5% of their participation grade. Students who miss 25% or more of the class sessions will receive a 0 for this component of the course. Missing classes for illness, university-sponsored events, and religious holidays does not count, but for an absence to be considered excused, you must contact the instructor within one week of the absence. Please reach out to the instructor with any questions about this policy.
    - b. Each class students will come prepared with at least 2 written discussion points or questions that they would like to discuss with their classmates. The instructors will randomly call on a student to get the discussion underway.
    - c. Consistent, high-quality participation—including respectful listening, contributing to discussion, and building on peers' insights—is expected each week. Occasional informal writing or group exercises may be used to facilitate discussion and deepen reflection. Students will be docked 1 point of their participation grade (1/100 pts) for every day they do not bring their assigned text *or* do not speak up in class. If you are struggling to participate in discussion, please come to office hours or reach out to the instructor.
    - d. Be sure to arrive on time for class. Excessive tardiness will lead to a reduction in your participation grade. There will be a three-day grace period (meaning that there will be no grade penalty for the first three days a student is late to class), but after that, you will be docked 1 point of your participation grade (1/100) for each day you come to class late.
  2. Midterm Assessment 1: Exam— 30%
    - a. On February 19th, students will write an in-class exam covering the first half of the course material. The exam will include (a) a multiple-choice component testing their knowledge of basic information from the first five weeks of the course, (b) an analytical essay section that asking students to identify constituent elements of the contemporary American conception of justice and citizenship (whether at the level of institutional design or popular imagination) that might plausibly be shared with (or have been directly influenced by) the pre-modern, pre-liberal sources covered in the first five weeks of the course, and suggest how American principles and practice fundamentally diverge from those sources. The essay will be graded for its evidence (has the student identified precise, appropriate examples from primary sources and historical case studies assigned?) and persuasiveness (can students accurately describe the arguments of secondary literature while evaluating those arguments?). At the following class session students will engage in a group discussion and debate where they (a) present



the answers provided in their in-class essay (b) discuss and debate which historically neglected ideas or practices might usefully be revived to advance justice and accommodate diversity in an increasingly globalized world (b) write a short reflection paper explaining how the in-class discussion changed (or reinforced) their perspective on the ideals and institutions that can serve citizenship in the United States.

3. Midterm Assessment 2: Reflection Paper— 20%
  - a. On April 8<sup>th</sup> at 12:00AM (midnight), students will submit a short reflection paper (approximately 1200 words) identifying valuable mechanisms of citizen activity outside the realm of direct voting rights, and be asked to state their view of whether contemporary democracy would benefit most from emphasizing the importance of voting (as defended by some of the cutting-edge scholarship assigned), or by emphasize alternative means of advancing justice (as defended in other assigned scholarship). This exercise will require students to demonstrate familiarity with the examples of political protest and collective action illustrated by English, American, and French revolutionaries, *and* recent scholarly interpretations of the political significance of those events. After submitting their reflection paper students will collectively debate their answers to this question, in the process identifying the models of citizenship, principles of justice, and mechanisms for expressing the interests of social diversity, most worth protecting in the twenty first century.
4. Final Exam — 30%
  - a. There will be a cumulative final exam made up of combination of multiple choice and short answer essays. In one of these essays, students will be asked to apply conceptual material from the semester to an analysis of a case study covered in class, while defending a claim about how historical ideas and examples can (or cannot) help advance the cause of citizenship for a just and diverse world in the twenty first century (in the process demonstrating their ability to engage knowledgably, logically, and critically the arguments of recent, cutting-edge scholarship that enlists historical ideas and examples in the service of contemporary causes of citizenship and justice).

## Grading Scale

All assignments will be graded out of a 100-point scale and then converted into the final grade (also on a 100-point scale) using percentages outlined below. Your letter grade will be determined using the following ranges.

93-100%	A
90-92.9%	A-
87%-89.9%	B+



83%-86.9%	B
80%-82.9%	B-
77%-79.9%	C+
73%-76.9%	C
70%-72.9%	C-
67%-69.9%	D+
60%-66.9%	D
Below 60%	E

## **V. Course Schedule**

Listed readings to be completed by the first class day of each week.

### **Week 1: Citizens Who Rule: The Puzzle of Collective Self-Government**

Day 1: General Course Introduction

Day 2: Democracy: Citizen Rulers

Readings: Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.80-82

Josiah Ober, *Demopolis: Democracy Before Liberalism*, chapters 1 and 2

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 293-319.

### **Week 2: Ancient Republics: Greece versus Rome**

Day 1: Greek Republics

Readings: Plutarch, *Lives*, Lycurgus, Solon, Alcibiades

Ryan Balot, *Greek Political Thought* (Wiley-Blackwell 2006), pp. 48-63

Day 2: The Rise of the Roman Republic

Readings: Plutarch, *Lives*, Numa, Ceasar, Cicero

Jack Ferguson, "The Ciceronian Origins of American Law and Constitutionalism," 48

*Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 181 (2025)

### **Week 3: The Decline of Roman Republicanism**

Day 1: Roman Constitutionalism

Readings: Polybius, *The Histories*, Book VI, section 2 through 18

Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 40-65,  
214-232

Day 2: Roman Resilience and Decay

Readings: Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. G.A. Williamson, pp. 27-32, 133-178, 374-386

Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIX

Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton  
University Press, 2017), pp. 6-22

### **Week 4: Christianity's Challenge to Roman Law**

Day 1: Christianity's Challenge to Roman Law

Readings: Jerome, letter 14; Pliny the Younger, letter 10; Tertullian, Apology, 39.1-6; Theodosian



Code 16.2.6; Constantine, Letter to Anulinus; Eusebius, Life of Constantine 3.48

Day 2: Christianity's Transformation of Law

Readings: Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: Inventing the Western Individual* (Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 51-78

Luke Timothy Johnson, "Law in Early Christianity" in *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53-70

### **Week 5: Medieval Law and Institutions**

Day 1: Institutions and Citizenship

Readings: Anna Gryzmala-Busse, "Beyond War and Contracts: The Medieval and Religious Roots of the European State," *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (2020): 19-36.

Maarten Prak, *Citizens Without Nations: Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, c. 1000-1789* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27-49

Day 2: Law and Justice

Readings: Deborah Boucoyannis, *Kings as Judges: Power, Justice, and the Origin of Parliaments* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 1-84

Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, pp. 120-155

### **Week 6: Review and Reflection**

Day 1: Continuation and Review

Day 2: In-Class Exam

### **Week 7: Discussion, Popular Politics, Reformation**

Day 1: TBD

Day 2: Popular Politics Under Monarchy

Readings: Magna Carta; Hume History of England, Appendix II (p. 455-488).

### **Week 8: The Short Life of English Republicanism**

Day 1: The Death of a King and the Birth of the English Republic

Readings: The True Levellers' Standard

First Agreement of the Free People of England

Milton, "The Easy and Ready Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth"

Day 2: What Was the English Republic Really About?

Readings: Christopher Hill, *A World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 39-51, 361-286

Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp. 23-56

### **Week 9: England's Glorious Revolution: For What? And for Whom?**

Day 1: Radical Revolutionaries?

Readings: English Bill of Rights



Michael Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 3-22

Melinda Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (Penn State Press, 1999), pp. 1-36

Day 2: Conservative Revolutionaries?

Readings: Steven Pincus & James Robinson, “What Really Happened During the Glorious Revolution?” in *Institutions, Property Rights, and Economic Growth*, eds. Galini & Sened (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

### **Week 10: American Revolutionaries**

Day 1: How Revolutionary Was the American Revolution?

Readings: Gordon Wood, “The Radicalism of the American Revolution”

Eric Nelson, “Patriot Royalism: The Stuart Monarchy in American Political Thought”

Day 2: Order and Liberty in the American Revolution

Readings: Holly Brewer, “Reconsidering John Locke and the Origins of American Slavery,” *American Historical Review* 122 (2017): 1038-1078.

Keidrick Roy, “Racial Feudalism,” *Modern Intellectual History* 21 (2024): 296-327.

### **Week 11: The First French Republic**

Day 1: Competing Conceptions of Citizenship

Readings: Sieyes, *What is the Third Estate?*; Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Day 2: Active and Passive Citizens

Readings: Richard Tuck, *Active and Passive Citizens* (Princeton University Press, 2024), pp. 13-70

### **Week 12: Modern Reflections on Antiquity**

Day 1: David Hume, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations, pg. 377-422; Niccolo Machiavelli, Of the Different Kinds of Republics, and of What Kind the Roman Republic Was

Day 2: Reflection Paper Due

### **Week 13: Self-Government in Nineteenth Century America**

Day 1: Race within the Republic

Readings: David Walker, *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*

Melvin Rogers, “David Walker and the Political Power of Appeal,” *Political Theory* 45 (2015): 208-233

Day 2: States within the Republic

Readings: Samuel B. Chase, majority opinion in *Texas v White*

Randy Barnett, “From Antislavery Lawyer to Chief Justice: The Remarkable But Forgotten Career of Samuel B. Chase,” *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 63 (2013).

### **Week 14: Wrapping Up**

Day 1: Popular Politics in the Nineteenth-Century

Readings: Daniel Carpenter, *Democracy by Petition* (Harvard University Press, 2021), chapter 15

Day 2: Preparation for Final Exam

## **VII. University Policy Statements**

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### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so please review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If an instructor suspects that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, the instructor is obligated by University Rules to report those suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that a student violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in the course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If students have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, they should contact the instructor.

### **Disability Services (with Accommodations for Illness)**

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If students anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health and medical conditions, whether chronic or temporary), they should let their instructor know immediately so that they can privately discuss options. Students do not need to disclose specific information about a disability to faculty. To establish reasonable accommodations, students may be asked to register with Student Life Disability Services (see below for campus-specific contact information). After registration, students should make arrangements with their instructors as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that accommodations may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If students are ill and need to miss class, including if they are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of viral infection or fever, they should let their instructor know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations.

## **Grievances and Solving Problems**

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

## **Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct**

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a welcoming community. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office (CRCO):

- Online reporting form: <http://civilrights.osu.edu/>
- Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605
- [civilrights@osu.edu](mailto:civilrights@osu.edu)

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of

such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

## **Religious Accommodations**

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement **and** the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#). Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#)

## **Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity**

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.



All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship, or on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

### **Intellectual Diversity**

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.