

Political Science 456
Fall 2003
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LINCOLN AND THE CRISIS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Texts to be Purchased:

Abraham Lincoln, Speeches and Writings, Vol. I, 1832-1858 (Library of America).
Abraham Lincoln, Speeches and Writings, Vol. II, 1859-1865 (Library of America).
Lord Charnwood, Abraham Lincoln (Dover).
James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom (Ballantine Books).
Purple packet of course readings.
Yellow packet of course readings.

Goals of the Course:

“ ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.”

Lincoln, June 16, 1858

The most striking feature of the world today is the military, political, economic, and ideological supremacy of the United States. At this moment of history, after its triumphs over German and Japanese imperialism, Nazism, and Communism in the twentieth century, and its victories against global terrorism in this century, American liberal democracy seems to constitute a tremendous success, a destination for individuals and a model for nations throughout the world. But how sturdy is this apparent success? Is it rooted in the essential features of the American regime—its moral principles and its constitution—or does it reflect transient movements or accidents of history?

Less than a century and half ago, and less than a century after its founding, the United States passed through a terrible military, political, and moral crisis, a crisis which almost destroyed the American regime—either by breaking the republic apart into separate slave and free republics or by spreading slavery throughout the nation—and a crisis which was resolved only at the price of over six hundred thousand deaths. Had the outcome of the crisis over slavery in the 1850s and 1860s been different, as it easily could have been—had the Union either dissolved or become all slave—would not American liberal democracy, and with it perhaps liberal democracy itself, have been consigned to the ash-heap of history as a disastrous failure, a model to be shunned by all?

In this course, we will examine what light this crisis sheds on the nature of American liberal democracy, its strengths and its weaknesses, its principles and its constitution. Was the Civil War an

inevitable outgrowth of the founding of the American regime, a gigantic time-bomb lodged in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which finally went off eighty years later? Were the spread of slavery, the belief that slavery is a positive good or a matter of moral indifference, and the belief in a constitutional right of states to secede natural and reasonable consequences of the American founding? Or was the Civil War primarily caused by the decay of Americans' faith in their founding principles? Furthermore, does the final resolution of the crisis over slavery reflect primarily the strength of the original principles of American liberal democracy and of the Constitution or the greatness of Abraham Lincoln, the man praised by Lord Charnwood as "the greatest among those associated with the cause of popular government" (455)? Did Lincoln revive Americans' ancient faith in their founding liberal principles? Or did he refound the American regime?

We will examine the crisis of American liberal democracy over slavery through the thought of Lincoln, the principal statesman and thinker in that crisis. We will focus our study on his principal speeches and writings. But in order to understand the theoretical, moral, constitutional, and political problems he faced and addressed, we will also study for ourselves the great founding documents, the speeches and writings of Lincoln's great predecessors, contemporaries, and opponents, and the political history of Lincoln's time.

Requirements:

There will be two short (5-7 page) papers (worth 25% each) and one longer (12-14 page) paper (worth 40-45%). You must do all of the written work in order to pass the course. You will be docked a half of a grade for each day that a paper of yours is late unless you either have asked for (and received) my permission beforehand or have a very good excuse. Roughly 5-10% of your grade will be determined by class participation. You will be expected to read the assigned texts carefully before we discuss them in class. Regular attendance is expected.

Assignments:

August 26 Introduction

August 28 Founding Principles.
Declaration of Independence (1776-final version);
Articles of Confederation (1781);
Northwest Ordinance (1787);
Constitution (1787);
 Letter of Patrick Henry, 18 Jan. 1773;
Declaration of Independence (1776-original version);
 Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (1784);
 Letter of Timothy Pickering, 6 Mar. 1785;
 Letter of John Jay, June 1788;
 Memorandum of James Madison, 20 Oct. 1789.
 (All in purple packet).
 Charnwood, pp. 1-25.

- September 2 How to End Slavery?
 Letter of Thomas Jefferson, 22 April 1820;
Missouri Compromise (1820-21) (in purple packet);
 Henry Clay, Speech before American Colonization Society (1827);
 Letter to Pindell (1849);
 William Lloyd Garrison, Fourth of July Address, 1829;
 Opening Statement of the First Issue of the Liberator, 1831;
 Editorial on Nat Turner's Insurrection, 1831;
 Garrison Embraces Perfectionism, 1837 (in yellow packet).
 Charnwood, pp. 26-61.
- September 4 The Greatest Threats to Liberty.
 Lincoln, To the People of Sangamo County, March 9, 1832 (1-5);
 Protest in the Illinois Legislature, March 3, 1837 (18);
 Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, January 27, 1838 (28-36).
 Charnwood, pp. 62-115.
- September 9 Moderation and Justice.
 Lincoln, Address to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, Illinois,
 February 22, 1842 (81-90).
 McPherson, chapters 1-2.
- September 11 Expansion and Slavery.
 Lincoln, Letter to Durley, October 3, 1845 (111-3);
 Replying to Charges of [Religious] Infidelity, July 31, 1846 (139-40);
 "Spot" Resolutions in the House of Representatives, December 22, 1847 (158-9);
 Speech on the War with Mexico, January 12, 1848 (161-70);
 Letters to Herndon, 1848 (172-4, 175-6, 199-201);
 Letter to Greeley, June 27, 1848 (201-2);
 Proposal in House for Abolition of Slavery in DC, January 10, 1849 (227-8).
- September 16 Permanent Slavery or Equality for All?
 John Calhoun, Speech on the Oregon Bill, June 27, 1848;
 Speech on the Admission of California and the General State of the Union, March 4,
 1850;
 Charles Sumner, Speech on Segregation in Boston, 1849;
 Wendell Phillips, Speech on Abolitionists, 1853.
 (All in yellow packet).
 McPherson, chapters 3-4.
- September 18 The Politics and the Logic of Opposing Slavery.

Lincoln, Notes on Practice of Law, 1850? (245-6);
 Eulogy on Henry Clay, July 6, 1852 (259-72);
 Fragments on Government, 1854? (301-3);
 Fragment on Slavery, 1854? (303).
 Charnwood, chapter 5.

- September 23 America's Abandonment of the Declaration of Independence?
 Lincoln, Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854 (307-348).
- September 25 America's Progress in Degeneracy.
 Lincoln, Letter to Joshua Speed, August 24, 1855 (360-3);
 Speech at Kalamazoo, August 27, 1856 (376-82).
 McPherson, chapter 5.
- September 30 A Constitutional Right to Slavery?
Dred Scott v. Sandford, March 6, 1857;
 Frederick Douglass, Speech on Dred Scott Decision, May 1857.
 (Both in purple packet)
1st Paper Due
- October 2 The Declaration, the Constitution, and Slavery.
 Lincoln, On the Dred Scott Case, June ? 1857? (388-9).
 Speech on the Dred Scott Decision, June 26, 1857 (390-403).
 McPherson, chapter 6.
- October 7 The Nationalization of Slavery?
 Lincoln, "House Divided" Speech, June 16, 1858 (426-34);
 Speech at Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 1858 (439-58).
 McPherson, chapter 7.
- October 9 Majority Rule, Slavery, and Equality.
 First and Second Lincoln-Douglas Debates (495-585).
- October 16 Cultural Diversity and Equality.
 Third and Fourth Lincoln-Douglas Debates (586-638, 669-78).
- October 21 Opposition to Slavery and Support for Racial Equality?
 Fifth and Sixth Lincoln-Douglas Debates (687-773).
- October 23 War and Peace.
 Seventh Lincoln-Douglas Debate (774-822).
 Seward, The Irrepressible Conflict, October 25, 1858 (purple packet).

- October 28 Right Makes Might?
Lincoln, Speech at Columbus, Ohio, September 16, 1859 (31-58);
Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio, September 17, 1859 (59-89);
Address at Cooper Institute, February 27, 1860 (111-130);
Speech at New Haven, Connecticut, March 6, 1860 (132-150).
- October 30 Secession and Revolution.
Lincoln, Autobiography, June 1860 (160-7);
Party Platforms, 1860;
Mississippi Resolutions on Secessions, November 30, 1860 (purple packet);
Lincoln, Letters to Gilmer, Weed, Stephens (190-2, 194);
Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois, February 11, 1861(199);
Address to the New Jersey Senate at Trenton, New Jersey, February 21, 1861 (209-10);
Speech at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 22, 1861 (213-4).
Charnwood, chapter 6.
- November 4 The Case Against Secession.
Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861 (215-224).
McPherson, chapter 8.
- November 6 The Founding Principles of the Confederacy.
Alexander Stephens, "Cornerstone Address," March 22, 1861 (yellow packet).
Constitution of the Confederate States of America, 1861 (purple packet).
Charnwood, chapter 7-8.
- November 11 The Union, Constitution, and the Rebellion.
Lincoln, Message to Congress in Special Session, July 4, 1861 (246-61).
2nd Paper Due
- November 13 The Union, the Constitution, and Emancipation.
Lincoln, Letters to Fremont, Browning (266-70);
Address to Border-State Representatives for Compensated Emancipation, July 12, 1862 (340-2);
Address on Colonization, August 14, 1862 (353-7);
Letter to Greeley, August 22, 1862 (357-8);
Meditation on the Divine Will, September 1862 (359);
Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862 (368-70);
Final Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863 (424-5).
Charnwood, chapter 9-10.
- November 18 The Union, the Constitution, and Civil Liberties.

Lincoln, Proclamation on Writ of Habeas Corpus, September 24, 1862 (371);
 Letter to Erastus Corning, June 12, 1863 (454-63);
 Reply to the Ohio Democratic Convention, June 29, 1863 (465-70);
 Letter to Banks, August 5, 1863 (486-7);
 Letter to Hackett, August 17, 1863 (493);
 Letter to Conkling, August 26, 1863 (495-9).
 Charnwood, pp. 338-87, especially pp. 363-87.
 McPherson, chapter 20 and pp. 684-8.

November 20 A New Nation?

Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863 (536).
 Charnwood, pp. 387-456.

November 25 If Slavery Is Not Wrong, Nothing is Wrong.

Lincoln, Letter to Hodges, April 4, 1864 (585-6);
 Reply to Committee of the National Union Convention, June 9, 1864 (597-8);
 Letter to Robinson, August 17, 1864 (620-22);
 Speech to the 166th Ohio Regiment, August 22, 1864 (624);
 Response to Serenade, November 10, 1864 (641-2);
 Letter to Hurlbut, November 14, 1864 (642-3);
 Letter to Mrs. Lydia Bixby, November 21, 1864 (644);
 Letter to Glenn, February 7, 1865 (672).
 McPherson, pp. 760-830.

December 2 A Divine Punishment of America?

Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865 (686-7);
 Letter to Weed, March 15, 1865 (689);
 Response to Serenade, April 10, 1865 (696);
 Speech on Reconstruction, April 11, 1865 (697-701).
 McPherson, pp. 830-62.

December 4 Statesmanship in a Democracy: Justice, Prudence, and the Consent of the Governed.

Frederick Douglass, from "Life and Times";
 "Oration on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument, in Memory
 of Abraham Lincoln," April 14, 1876;
 W. E. B. DuBois, on Lincoln (in yellow packet);

December 9 Overview.

December 18 THIRD PAPER DUE in Chambers 203-C by 12:15 P. M.