

# Syllabus

## CSI:1214:0004 Special Topics II

### American Culture and Values

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Spring 2026

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## 1 Overview of the Course

This course is offered by the [Center for Intellectual Freedom](#). It consists of a series of 110-minute lectures held weekly in the evenings. The instructors, drawn from diverse backgrounds and experiences (including but not limited to university professors), will present engaging and thought-provoking topics for discussion in a class limited to 32 students. This small class size fosters open discussion and in-depth exploration of each topic’s multiple dimensions.

The courses organized by the Center for Intellectual Freedom aim to inspire students to embark on a compelling journey of discovery and learning about significant issues related to the courses’ theme.

The course *American Culture and Values* will explore the foundational ideas, texts, and traditions that have shaped American culture and values. Students are encouraged to grow stronger in their viewpoints and engage in open discussion, civil debate, and conversation.

### 1.1 Learning Objectives

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

- Identify and explain the major philosophical, literary, political, and economic ideas and texts that have shaped core American values such as individual liberty, self-reliance, limited government, free speech, and democratic capitalism;
- Engage in respectful, evidence-based, and intellectually rigorous discussion and debate on complex questions related to American culture, governance, and values;
- Formulate and articulate reasoned personal positions on foundational issues of freedom, responsibility, and prosperity in American society while considering diverse viewpoints;

- Recognize the role of intellectual freedom, open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and civil discourse in sustaining the principles and institutions of a free society.

These objectives reflect the course’s commitment to fostering critical thinking, intellectual independence, and informed engagement with the ideas that define American culture and values.

## 1.2 Outline of Course Topics

The following is an outline of the lectures planned for this course:

Week	Dates	Title	Lecturer
1	3/26	Freedom: Its Costs and Benefits	Richard Fumerton
2	4/2	Freedom of Speech	Timothy Hagle
3	4/9	America has a National Literature	Mark Bauerlein
4	4/16	Ideas in The Federalist	Alex P. Smith
5	4/23	Teachers of the Polis: Past and Present	Eric Dugdale
6	4/30	Self-Reliance as an American Value	Flavio Guimaraes
7	5/7	Why Capitalism Rocks!	Mike Whalen

See Section 2 for a detailed description of each lecture. See Section 3 for information about the instructors.

## 1.3 Required Textbooks, Readings, and Other Materials

All reading materials will be available on ICON. No textbook is required for this course.

## 1.4 Course Meeting Time and Place

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:20 PM on Thursdays

**Location:** S107 Pappajohn Business Building (PBB) — See Figures 1 and 2.

**Dates:** March 26 – May 7, 2026



Figure 1: Pappajohn Business Building



Figure 2: S107 PBB

## 1.5 Participation

This course is designed to foster lively, open, and frank discussion. All students are warmly invited to contribute their perspectives, challenge ideas, and explore diverse viewpoints in an intellectually engaging environment. Students are expected to maintain a high level of respect during discussions, treating all participants with courtesy and openness, even when disagreeing or challenging ideas. Disruptive, disrespectful, or personal attacks of any kind will not be tolerated.

## 2 Lectures

### 2.1 Freedom: Its Costs and Benefits

**Lecturer:** [Richard A. Fumerton](#) (Philosophy Dep., Univ. of Iowa)

In his classic discussion of freedom, John Stuart Mill predicted in the 19th century that “the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised over the individual... is soon likely to make itself recognized as the vital question of the future.” That future is our present, and Mill’s prediction seems accurate. While the United States still has a reputation for being the “land of the free,” there is no shortage of controversies concerning what regulations a state should be allowed to place on its citizens. Through influential writings from a few historically important figures and contemporary philosophers, we’ll critically evaluate philosophical views about how to address controversies concerning freedom, illustrating those views with issues that are front-and-center in the news of today.

### 2.2 Freedom of Speech

**Lecturer:** [Timothy Hagle](#) (Political Science Dep., Univ of Iowa)

This session will examine aspects of free speech. This will include discussion of the First Amendment and how the Supreme Court has interpreted the right. We will also consider aspects of speech such as “hate” speech, cancel culture, and political violence in relation to speech.

### 2.3 America Has a National Literature

**Lecturer:** [Mark Bauerlein](#) (Emory University & Trustee, New College of Florida)

In this class session, we will read representative works of American literature—that is, works that embody something that is essential to the American experience and the national character. They constitute a corpus of poems, essays, memoirs, and fiction that give flesh and humanity to our civic ideals. We will discuss

- Franklin, *Autobiography* (Chapter 1)

- Irving, "Rip van Winkle"
- Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
- Thoreau, Walden (Chapter 2)
- Whitman, "Song of Myself"

## 2.4 Ideas in The Federalist

**Lecturer:** [Alex Smith](#) (Political Science Dep., Univ of Iowa)

The Federalist is a series of essays written by supporters of the US Constitution during the state ratification conventions. These essays provide justifications for the design of the newly proposed national government and the expanded set of powers granted to the national government. During this session we will discuss the purpose of The Federalist essays, the arguments they were responding to, and the authors' descriptions of representation, separation of powers, and federalism in the proposed system of government. These arguments help us better understand the institutional design of the national government amidst contemporary concerns about American government and politics.

## 2.5 Teachers of the Polis: Past and Present

**Lecturer:** [Eric Dugdale](#) (board of the Society for Classical Studies)

In ancient Athens, poets and playwrights were more than entertainers—they were the *teachers of the polis* (Plato, *Laws* 659a), shaping civic values and sparking public debate. Young Athenians didn't just study democracy—they *performed* it, acting in tragedies and comedies at the packed Theater of Dionysus as part of their civic education. The timeless dramas of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides wrestled with questions of justice, responsibility, and the common good, while comic playwrights like Aristophanes used satire to challenge power and defend freedom of speech.

Fast forward to today: Who plays that role now? Where do we turn to learn our shared values—and from whom? Do art, film, and literature still teach us the values of our community, or have social media platforms like TikTok become the new stage for civic discourse? And do these new art forms shape our American culture and values or reflect them? Join us for an exploration of how art, performance, and popular culture play a part in democracies then and now.

## 2.6 Self-Reliance as an American value

**Lecturer:** [Flavio Guimaraes](#) (Radix Engineering & Software)

The lecture will be divided in 3 parts:

1. History of self-reliance as an American value

2. Challenges that self-reliance faces in present days
3. A framework of resources to help to overcome these challenges

This class explores self-reliance as a core American value, tracing its evolution from the practical independence of early pioneers on the physical frontier to Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophical emphasis on self-trust and the integrity of the mind. It then examines a contemporary crisis of dependency in which digital technologies, algorithmic influence, and economic pressures increasingly shape individual thought and behavior, risking mental passivity and loss of autonomy. The class introduces a framework of mental resources to help students understand these challenges and develop individual strategies for sustaining intellectual independence and self-direction.

## 2.7 Why Capitalism Rocks!

**Lecturer:** [Mike Whalen](#) (Pres. and CEO, Heart of America)

This presentation will discuss the human and economic reasons why capitalism not only works but rocks, providing superior benefits to humanity in comparison to all other economic systems. The lengthy and rather miserable history of almost all human existence will be briefly explored. This long period of pretty crappy stasis was followed by an explosion of wealth and freedom in just the past few hundred years. This explosive launch, often termed "The Great Enrichment", is the most dynamic thing that has happened in human history. It has elevated and liberated, in a relatively very short time, a good deal of humankind out of the mud and from crippling disease, grinding subsistence, short life spans, and general misery, and it continues to do so for millions of people every year.

This pro human explosion was a result of the growth of the radical concept of personal liberty and its companion free market capitalism.

The reason why capitalism generally makes humans better people and why capitalism is more fun will be explored. The inherent inferior structural dynamics of the dominant competing economic models, alternatively termed collectivism, authoritarianism, Marxism, fascism, and communism according to its variants of large state control, will be discussed as well.

### 3 Instructors

The course is organized by Professor Luciano de Castro, interim Director of the Center for Intellectual Freedom. Subsection 3.1 includes more information about Professor de Castro, including contact information. The remaining subsections below provide information about the lecturers in the course.

Any questions or general communications regarding the course or your participation in it should be directed to the course grader:

Chediak, Quentin [quentin-chediak@uiowa.edu](mailto:quentin-chediak@uiowa.edu)

#### 3.1 Luciano I. de Castro (Organizer)

Luciano I. de Castro is Professor at the Department of Economics, Tippie College of Business, and the Interim Director for the Center for Intellectual Freedom.

He is a professor of economics at the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business. Previously, he has been an assistant professor at Northwestern University (Kellogg School of Management, MEDS), the University of Illinois (Department of Economics), and a visiting professor at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Department of Economics). He holds a PhD and MSc from IMPA and is an electronic engineer from ITA (Brazil).



He has published in *Econometrica*, *Journal of Economic Theory*, *Journal of Econometrics*, *Economic Theory*, *Energy Economics*, and other important journals in economics. His main fields of research are economic theory, energy economics and Brazil's political economy and electricity markets. Recently, he has been investigating properties and applications of quantile preferences and their connection with econometrics, experiments, finance, and other areas of economics.

Campus Address: 116 Calvin Hall.

Phone: (319) 467-1334

E-mail: [luciano-decastro@uiowa.edu](mailto:luciano-decastro@uiowa.edu)

#### 3.2 Richard A. Fumerton

[Richard A. Fumerton](#), Philosophy Department, Univ. of Iowa.

Professor Fumerton is the author of *Metaphysical and Epistemological Problems of Perception* (1985), *Reason and Morality: A Defense of the Egocentric Perspective* (1990), *Metaepistemology and Skepticism* (1995), *Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth* (2002), *Epistemology* (2006), *Mill* (with Wendy Donner, 2009), *Knowledge, Thought and the Case for Dualism* (2013), and *A Consequentialist Defense of Libertarianism* (at press). He is the co-editor (with Diane Jeske) of *Philosophy Through Film* (2009) and *Readings in Political Philosophy* (2012). His present teaching and research interests include epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and value theory.



### 3.3 Timothy Hagle

[Timothy Hagle](#). Associate Professor, Political Science Dep., Univ of Iowa

Every four years, the media spotlight shines on the state during the prelude to its first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses, and University of Iowa political experts are in serious demand. State, national, and international reporters call upon UI faculty to explain how the caucuses work, and to provide insight into how Iowans are responding to candidates and their campaign strategies. One expert who is helping the University leverage this publicity opportunity is Tim Hagle, associate professor of political science in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



### 3.4 Mark Bauerlein

[Mark Bauerlein](#), Emeritus Professor, Emory University & Trustee, New College of Florida.

Mark Bauerlein earned his doctorate in English at UCLA in 1988. He taught at Emory from 1989-2018, with a two-and-a-half-year break in 2003-05 to serve as the Director, Office of Research and Analysis, at the National Endowment for the Arts. Apart from his scholarly work, he publishes in popular periodicals such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Washington Post*, *TLS*, and *Chroni-*



cle of Higher Education. His latest book, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future; Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30* was published in May 2008. He also co-edited a collection of essays entitled *The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism*, published in 2015.

### 3.5 Alex Smith

[Alex Smith](#), Political Science Dep., Univ of Iowa.

Alex P. Smith is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science. His teaching and research interests include American institutions (Congress & Presidency), legislative negotiation, political theory, and scholarship of teaching and learning. Alex is currently working on a book project about negotiation strategies used to overcome stalemate in Congress, for which he was selected for a Library of Congress Fellowship in Congressional Policymaking. He has published articles in *Public Choice* and the *Journal of Political Science Education*. Before entering academia, Alex worked as a legislative staffer for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Minnesota House of Representatives. His research areas include American Politics, Public Policy and Administration, and Political Theory."



### 3.6 Eric Dugdale

Eric Dugdale, board of the Society for Classical Studies.

Eric Dugdale is a scholar whose teaching and research focus on the ancient world. He earned a B.A. with Honors from the University of Oxford and a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he received the Tanner Award for Distinguished Teaching. His research centers on Greek theatre and its modern reception. He is the author of two books on Greek theatre, both published by Cambridge University Press, and co-editor (with James Morwood) of the series *Greece and Rome: Texts and Contexts*. He is currently completing a book on prophecy and power in the plays of Sophocles, forthcoming with Bloomsbury. Dr. Dugdale has taught or studied on every continent except Antarctica.



### 3.7 Flavio Guimaraes

Flavio Guimaraes, co-founder, [Radix Engineering & Software](#)

Flávio Niemeyer Guimarães is a Co-Founder and the Chief Practices & Alliances Officer of Radix, a global technology solutions company that delivers the most innovative, best-in-class solutions to scale and accelerate the digital transformation journey of asset intensive industries. Flávio has an extensive background in engineering and business, holding a B.Sc. and Master's in Chemical Engineering (UFRJ) and an MBA in Business Management (FGV, Brazil). A former faculty member at FGV with executive training from MIT Sloan, Rice, and Singularity University, Flávio brings a global perspective to the study of individual self-governance. Since 1995, he has been a dedicated student of Logosophy and currently serves as the Director of the Logosophical Foundation in the U.S.



### 3.8 Mike Whalen

Mike Whalen, CEO, [Heart of America](#).

Mr. Whalen is the founder of Heart of America Group and has served as President & CEO since 1978. Through Mr. Whalen's entrepreneurial leadership and vision, the company has grown from a single restaurant operation to a profitable and growing real estate development and hospitality enterprise. Mr. Whalen received his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Illinois in 1975, receiving the distinction of Bronze Tablet Scholar, and his law degree from Harvard Law School with honors in 1978.



## 4 Assignments and Grading

Students in this course will receive one of two grades: S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory). These grades do not affect the student's grade-point average (GPA).

To earn an S grade, a student must:

- attend at least 5 out of the 7 in-person lectures;

- complete the required assignment associated with each attended lecture.

In exceptional cases, students who attend only 4 out of 7 lectures may still receive an S grade if they provide a valid justification for the absences.

#### 4.1 Assignments

There are three types of assignments in this course.

**Initial and final reflection assignments** provide an opportunity for students to articulate their expectations at the beginning of the course and to reflect on the most significant take-aways at the end. The *initial assignment* is a short questionnaire about your expectations, motivations, and prior knowledge related to the course topics. It must be completed and submitted before the first class meeting. The *final assignment* is a brief reflection in which you identify and discuss the main highlights, key insights, or most valuable aspects of the course for you personally. Both assignments are short, ungraded, and intended solely for reflection and instructor awareness. To receive a Satisfactory (S) grade in the course, students must complete and submit **both** the initial and final reflection assignments. No content-based grading will be applied; thoughtful and honest completion is sufficient to meet the requirement.

**Required assignments** provide an opportunity for feedback and reflection on each lecture. These assignments include a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions and are due by 11:59 pm on the Sunday following the lecture. To earn a Satisfactory (S) grade, students must complete at least 5 of these required assignments. They will not be graded for content; an honest effort to respond thoughtfully to the questions is sufficient to satisfy the requirement.

**Optional assignments** may be proposed by some lecturers to explore the lecture topics in greater depth. These additional assignments are not required for the S grade, but instructors who offer them may provide feedback, offering valuable opportunities for further learning.

#### 4.2 Attendance and Accommodations

Attendance at all lectures is expected and will be verified. If a student cannot attend a lecture, they should notify the course Teaching Assistant (TA) as soon as possible:

TA: Chediak, Quentin [quentin-chediak@uiowa.edu](mailto:quentin-chediak@uiowa.edu)

#### 4.3 Calendar of Course Assignments

This course has no exams. The assignment associated with each lecture must be submitted by 11:59 PM on the Sunday following the lecture.

## **5 General information to students**

### **5.1 Student Complaints**

Students with any complaint should discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (Professor de Castro, see Subsection 3.1).

### **5.2 Drop Deadline for this Course**

The drop deadline for this course is Friday of the second week of classes.

### **5.3 UI Email**

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community.

### **5.4 Course ICON Site**

To access the course site, log into Iowa Courses Online (<https://icon.uiowa.edu/>) using your Hawk ID and password.

### **5.5 Academic Honesty and Misconduct**

All students are expected to prepare their assignments independently, without consulting classmates or others for assistance in completing them. Failure to do so may constitute academic misconduct.

### **5.6 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy**

Assignments in this course must be prepared directly by the students. AI tools may be used only to revise grammar and improve clarity, not to generate new content.

### **5.7 University Course Policies and Resources for Students**

Students should consult the University policies on Free Speech and Resources for Students page:

<https://provost.uiowa.edu/student-course-policies>

This page contains policies regarding:

- Free Speech and Expression
- Non-discrimination Statement
- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Absences from Class

- Absences for Religious Holy Days
- Absences for Military Service Obligations
- Classroom Expectations
- Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct and Supportive Measures
- Conflict Resolution
- Mental Health
- Basic Needs and Student Support