

“Democracy and Civic Engagement”

**Teagle Foundation Knowledge for Freedom Summer Seminar
Valdosta State University
June 9-27, 2025**

Syllabus

VSU course: INQR 2002 A (54267)

Seminar room: Converse Hall 1103

Seminar days and time: MTWRF (except June 19) 9:30-11:30 AM

Seminar Instructors:

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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces students to the concept and practice of citizenship in a diverse democratic society. It does so through the reading and discussion of classic texts of philosophy and literature, as well as historic documents, letters, and speeches. The main topics it covers are the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the democratic state; the principles, ideals, and promise – and realities – of the American democratic republic; the nature of citizenship and questions of law, political obligation, and justice in a democratic society; and local issues related to the quality of life in our region of the nation and state. The seminar also prepares students for work on their year-long civic engagement projects, which aim at putting the knowledge and concepts learned in the seminar into practice. It also introduces rising high school seniors to the college learning environment and seeks to prepare them for their college careers.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students completing this course will have a better understanding of:

- Important classical and enlightenment philosophical and theoretical views of the state, including its origins and the sources and nature of state authority;
- The founding ideals and principles of the American democratic republic and the ongoing struggle to fully realize them;
- The nature of citizenship in a democratic society, and classical and modern views on the question of whether and why we should obey the laws and state authority;
- Local issues related to the quality of life in our region of the nation and state, connecting the traditional readings with current public policies;
- The college learning environment, and how important philosophical, social, and political questions are dealt with in a college classroom.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are required to read the assigned texts for each day before the morning seminar begins. They are also required to write a brief, one-paragraph personal reflection on each day's readings, in which they discuss what they think the most important points or arguments of the readings are and their own personal reactions, positive and negative, to the readings. The personal reflections will be used as a starting point for discussion of the readings in the seminar sessions. They are also designed to help students learn to write analytically and critically about important ideas and issues. A VSU student teaching assistant (TA) will be available to help students with the readings and their writing assignments, including in dedicated work sessions each weekday evening. The readings reflections should be submitted to the assignment folder created for this purpose in BlazeView by 11:00 PM the night before the readings are discussed.

Signature Assignment: Each student must also create and present a final PowerPoint (or Canva) presentation in which they apply the assigned readings, or ideas of key thinkers discussed in the course, to a current political or social problem or issue. The presentations will be made on the afternoon of the last day of the course, June 27. Further details of the assignment will be provided in class.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADES

Students taking this course for academic credit will be assessed on their participation in the class. Participation includes attendance, written personal reflections on the readings, participation in class discussions and debates, and the final PowerPoint presentation. Based on this assessment, students will be assigned both a letter and number grade.

READINGS

Photocopies of all required readings for this course will be distributed to students before the week in which they are to be read. Pdf files of the readings are also posted on BlazeView along with lecture PowerPoints and any supplemental materials.

SEMINAR TOPICS AND READINGS

Part I – Democratic Foundations

6/9 – *Ancient Views of the State* (James)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, I.I and I.II, III.I, III.V-IX

Ancient and pre-modern philosophers ask many of the same questions about politics, the nature of the state, and citizenship that we do today, and often come up with answers that are both very different and familiar to our current ways of thinking. In these selections from *The Politics*, the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) claims that the state is a political association which exists by nature. He also discusses the relationship between the state and individual, asserting that “man is a political animal” for whom membership in a political community is necessary for full human development, as well as the nature of citizenship and who can and cannot be a citizen. Finally, Aristotle discusses the different “correct” and “deviated” (or corrupted) forms of state constitution – the rule of one, the few, and the many – and how these relate to the distribution of economic wealth. He also discusses the true purpose of the state and the just distribution of political power.

Key Questions:

1. Why does Aristotle believe the state is a natural association?
2. What does he mean when he says that humans are “political animals”?
3. What defines citizenship for Aristotle, and who can or cannot be a citizen?
4. What, for Aristotle, is the key difference between the “correct” and “deviated” forms of each type of constitution?
5. What does Aristotle believe is the true purpose of the state, and for this reason and from the perspective of justice, who should rule?

6/10 – *The State and Social Contract: Enlightenment Views* (James)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 13-14, 17-18

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 2-4, 8-9, 18-19

The political thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries Enlightenment, emphasizing human reason and individualism over tradition and more holistic, hierarchical notions of society, exerted a strong influence on the founders of the American republic. In the readings for these two days, the Enlightenment political philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-

1704) put forth their justifications for the state and its powers vis-à-vis the citizenry. To make their arguments, the two Englishmen both utilize the device of an imaginary state of nature, defined as a world without government. Each defines the state of nature quite differently, however, leading them to provide different reasons for rational, self-interested (individual) humans to leave the state of nature and enter into a voluntary agreement to form a political commonwealth or state. These different reasonings yield different views of the basic purpose of the state, on the proper powers of the state and the rights retained by individual members of the political community, and on whether subjects or the people have the right to change their form of government or rebel.

Key Questions:

1. What is the state of nature?
2. How is Hobbes' state of nature different from Locke's?
3. Why, according to each philosopher, do humans decide to leave the state of nature and form a state? What is the purpose of the state for each?
4. How do the powers of the state differ for Hobbes and Locke, and how does each justify this authority? What rights do subjects of the state or members of the political community retain?
5. According to Hobbes and Locke, do citizens or subjects of the state have a right to rebel or change their form of government? If so, under what conditions?

6/11 – *The State and Social Contract* (James)

J.-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chapters 6-8; Book II, Chapters 1, 3-4

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) challenged many of the rationalistic and individualistic ideas of the Enlightenment, and his political writings can be viewed as a critique of Hobbes and Locke. In these selections from *The Social Contract*, Rousseau also begins from a mythical state of nature, which humans leave for the benefits of cooperation and being part of a political community. Through the social contract, individuals agree to transfer all of their natural rights and powers to the community and be governed by the general will. By surrendering their individual sovereignty citizens, regain it in enhanced form through the sovereignty of the whole of which they are now a part. In Rousseau's ideal state, private or partial interests are transcended by the general interest, and by obeying the general will citizens are only obeying themselves.

Key Questions:

1. Why do humans decide to leave the state of nature and form a political association or state?
2. What are the terms of the social contract? What does each person agree to in acceding to the contract, and why is this necessary?
3. What is the nature of sovereign power in Rousseau's political community, and how does this relate to the individual and their private interests?
4. What is the general will and how is it determined?
5. What does Rousseau mean when he says that by being forced to obey the general will if they disagree with it, citizens are "forced to be free"?

6. What is the nature of freedom or liberty in Rousseau's civil state and how does this differ from natural liberty?

6/12 – *The American Republic: Ideals and Realities I* (Baun)

Declaration of Independence

US Constitution

The Founders of the American Republic were greatly influenced by the ideas of Ancient and Enlightenment political philosophy. In today's readings, we discuss two key founding documents, The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. These documents proclaim the main principles and ideals of the new American Republic, echoing in many instances the writings of earlier political thinkers. The US Constitution in particular, however, also reflects both the shortcomings of the founding vision and its evolution through a process of amendment in response to the forces of social and political change. As such, it remains a powerful yet still incomplete blueprint for a just and democratic republic.

Key Questions:

1. What are the main goals of The Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution?
2. How do these documents reflect the ideas of political thinkers we have previously read and discussed concerning such things as rights, the nature and purpose of the state, the ultimate source of political authority (sovereignty), and the right of the people to rebel?
3. How did the Constitution initially apportion representation for each state in the House of Representatives in Article 1? What did it originally say about escaped servants (slaves) in Article 4, Section 2? What do these provisions say about prevailing views on equality at that time, and also about the need for compromise to gain approval of the Constitution?
4. How has the US Constitution evolved since its ratification in 1787, especially concerning the issues of slavery, citizenship, and the right to vote?
5. What, if anything, do you think is missing in the US Constitution as it now stands? What, if anything, would you like to see changed?

6/13 – *The American Republic: Ideals and Realities II* (Baun)

Abraham Lincoln, First and Second Inaugural Addresses

Abraham Lincoln, "Address at Gettysburg"

Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro," esp. pp. 6 (para. beginning with "Fellow-citizens") – 18

The new American Republic fell well short of the lofty ideals and aspirations proclaimed in its founding documents, however. In particular, it was bedeviled by the issue of slavery (which is only indirectly referenced in the pre-1865 Constitution) and the deepening political fissures among Americans and the states which this generated. Things eventually came to a head with the Civil War of 1861-1865 which resulted in the defeat of the Southern Confederacy and the abolition of slavery. The flaws of the American system and the dynamics leading up to this violent reckoning, and the challenges of its aftermath, are addressed in these famous speeches by President Abraham Lincoln, who at first sought to prevent the Civil War, but then fought to

preserve the Union and afterwards to “bind up the nation’s wounds,” and the escaped slave and abolitionist orator Frederick Douglass. Though delivered some 150 years ago, the messages of these speeches still resonate today.

Key Questions:

1. What does President Lincoln say about slavery and the demands of secessionists in his First Inaugural address? What is his primary purpose in this speech?
2. What is the main purpose of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address? How does he say the nation should honor the sacrifices of those who died in the battle?
3. What does Lincoln say about slavery and the results of the Civil War in his Second Inaugural address? What is his primary purpose in this speech?
4. Why does Frederick Douglass believe that celebrating the 4th of July is hypocritical?
5. What does Douglass say about the American church (religious leaders and institutions) and why?
6. In the end, is Douglass pessimistic or optimistic about the future of the country and whether it will ever live up to its founding principles and ideals?

Part II – Citizenship, Law, and Justice

6/16 – Classical Approaches to Democratic Citizenship (Baun)

“Pericles’ Funeral Oration,” from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

This famous speech was given by the Athenian leader Pericles after the first battles of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) between Athens and its rival Greek city-state Sparta, and is recounted by the Greek historian Thucydides (c. 460-c. 400 BC) in his classic *History of the Peloponnesian War*. In his speech, Pericles celebrates the virtues and glories of Athenian democracy, including the liberties and freedoms of its citizens, its foundation on the rule of law and equality of all citizens before the law, its selection of leaders on the basis of merit rather than social status, its mutual tolerance and openness to the world, and its great prosperity. He also praises the civic-mindedness of its individual citizens, who give as much attention to politics and public affairs as they do to their own private business and concerns. He reminds his audience, however, that Athens’ unique accomplishments must be courageously defended, requiring a strong sense of duty among its citizens and a willingness to sacrifice. Pericles’ words are thus a powerful expression of the duty of every citizen to fight to defend democracy and freedom, and a reminder that citizenship entails both rights and obligations.

Key Questions:

1. In what ways, according to Pericles, is Athens different than its neighbors (other Greek city-states, especially Sparta)? Why does Pericles say that Athens is “the school of Hellas (Greece)”?
2. Do you think the Athens described by Pericles resembles in any ways contemporary America? In what ways does it do so, and in what ways does it not?
3. What is Pericles’ main purpose or goal in this speech? Do you think he achieves it?

4. What is the relationship between the individual citizen and the Athenian city-state (or polity), according to Pericles? What does the citizen owe the city, and what does the city owe its citizens, including the families of those who have sacrificed their lives on its behalf?
5. Compare Pericles' funeral oration with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; in what ways are they similar or different?

6/17 – What Authority do We Obey? (Baun)
Sophocles, *Antigone*

This classic Greek tragedy written by the playwright Sophocles in 442 BC is based on the myth of Oedipus, the King of Thebes, who unknowingly marries his own mother, Jocasta, and then blinds himself once he finds out (after Jocasta commits suicide). Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, later simultaneously kill each other on the battlefield outside the gates of Thebes, leaving the kingship of Thebes in the hands of Creon, Jocasta's brother. In the play *Antigone*, one of Oedipus' two remaining children, along with another daughter Ismene, both now in the custody of Creon, seeks to secure a respectable burial for Polynices, against the orders of Creon. She defies the king and is caught. Antigone defends her decision to break Creon's law by claiming the superiority of divine over human law. The play thus portrays a classic conflict between civic responsibility (to obey the law) and personal duty to family and religious beliefs.

Key Questions:

1. Why does Creon decree that Eteocles will be buried and Polynices left unburied?
2. What does Creon believe is his primary responsibility as ruler of Thebes? And what, according to Creon, is the main responsibility of the city's citizens?
3. Why does Antigone defy Creon's order to leave Polynices unburied? How does she justify this disobedience?
4. Who, Creon or Antigone, is the hero of this play, and Why?
5. Which of the two sisters, Antigone or Ismene, is more admirable, and Why?

6/18 – Questioning Society's Norms (James)
Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Apology

Socrates had been a military hero and a stonecutter in the city-state or "polis" of Athens, Greece. As he grew older and reflected on his experiences in the War he became very unhappy with the bad influence that the "Sophists" had on Greek ethics and political life. Sophists taught people rhetoric and public speaking, so that they could convince the citizens of Athens to vote in their favor. Many alleged experts achieved notoriety by arguing for sophistic immoral beliefs. Socrates challenged such experts in the streets of Athens, publicly, and showed himself to be better at arguing than they were. He saw himself as a "gadfly" irritating Athens to make it move in a new and better direction. Socrates saw himself as seeking the truth while Sophists were just arguing any side and willing to mislead the public. Many young people in Athens liked Socrates for his honesty, and joined Socrates becoming his students. An Oracle at Delphi told Socrates that he was the "wisest of men," i.e. Socrates knew what he did not know, he

appreciated his own ignorance and his own limitations. (This is what we now call “Socratic Wisdom.”) This is an example of “irony” (Socrates is using the term wisdom in the opposite of its literal meaning, he is wise because he knows how he is not wise.)

Socrates was brought to the court of Athens on charges of worshipping false gods and corrupting the youth, and sentenced to death. At this time, he could have escaped but chose to stay and “carry out the death sentence” of Athens by killing himself, drinking hemlock.

Philosophoi in Greek means lovers of wisdom, lovers of truth. After Socrates has been brought into court, he gives his defense before the gathered group of Athenian citizens. It is also an “ironic” Apology, since he is explaining his thought, but he is actually not “apologizing” at all. On Corrupting the Youth: Socrates begins a dialogue with his accuser Meletus. He defends himself by practicing his art. (1) Meletus says that Socrates is the person in Athens who is responsible for the corruption of the youth. Yet, it is absurd to say that only Socrates corrupts the youth. This implies that everyone else helps the youth. But just as there are few horse trainers, so there are few who are in a position to really “train” the youth. And, contrary to what Meletus asserts, Socrates is one of these “trainers.” (2) Who would voluntarily corrupt the youth? (25c-26a) If Socrates voluntarily harmed the youth, then (since evil begets evil) they would harm him. And no rational person voluntarily harms himself. But if he harmed the youth involuntarily, then he should be instructed (educated) -- not punished. Regarding the Charge of Impiety: Could a person believe in things like clothes and yet not in human beings who wear them? So too with divine things: Since Socrates believes in a *Daimon* (a divine thing), it follows that he believes in divinities.

Key Questions:

1. Who were the “sophists”? Could you point to examples of sophists in our time as well?
2. How were sophists different from “philosophoi”?
3. What was the political context of Athens? How did it relate to philosophy?
4. What were the two charges against Socrates?
5. What did the Oracle at Delphi mean when he told Socrates, “You are the wisest of men”?
6. What is Socratic wisdom? How does it relate to “irony”?

6/19 – Juneteenth Holiday – No Seminar

6/20 – *The Obligation to Obey* (James)

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Crito

Socrates is explaining to Crito why he feels he must remain in prison and carry out the death sentence of the court of Athens. Crito is hoping Socrates will simply leave Athens and go to live in another Greek city-state like Sparta, which would have been common and accepted at this time. Socrates feels this would be wrong, because above all, Socrates respects the law (the government and the courts of Athens). To disobey the law is wrong, even if he feels the death sentence they gave him is unfair. There are specific principles Socrates appeals to in the Crito: First, the anti-retaliation principle: returning injury for injury is wrong. Socrates

argues for this principle as follows: (1) One must never do wrong (49a-b). (2) Therefore, one must never return a wrong for a wrong (49b). (3) Wronging someone is the same as injuring him (49c). (4) Therefore, one must never return injury for injury (Even if it is the government injuring you?!). Second, the contract principle: one should keep one's just agreements (49e) (Even if the government might have violated an agreement). Third, an enforcement principle: court decisions should have final authority in the disposition of cases (50b) (Even if we don't like the court's decision, we have to abide it).

Key Questions:

1. Do you agree or disagree with Socrates that we must obey our government, even when we find the government to be unjust?
2. Is the death penalty a punishment that you find controversial? Consider how different states within the United States view the death penalty.
3. Does the idea of a contract with our government mean that we should never leave it or go against it, or should we sometimes break contracts?
4. Should the anti-retaliation principle apply to all governments at all times? How about the American Revolution?

6/23 – Civil Disobedience (James)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Martin Luther King, Jr. writes his letter as a response to eight clergymen who claimed his activity in civil rights was unwise and untimely. He explains that he feels his actions are necessary, and makes a set of key distinctions. First, he makes the distinction between just and unjust laws. Within just laws, there are two types: they should be obeyed in most cases, except when unjustly applied (i.e. Applied to one group and not others for reasons of racism or prejudice). In the case of unjust laws, King says we have a moral responsibility to disobey such laws – they are not binding as they contradict the moral law. The situation that King is currently facing is a dispute regarding parade permits: the parade permit had been legally applied for and granted, but was taken back when the local government found out that King would be involved. If one chooses to engage in civil disobedience, by breaking of just laws applied unjustly, then one must do it openly, with willingness to accept the penalty, and even potential physical harm. King makes a comparison between his work and Socrates and civil disobedience. King also explains his dissatisfaction with white moderate views, in which a passive negative peace and maintaining a status quo is chosen rather than a morally correct positive peace. King says he is an extremist – specifically an extremist for love and justice. This is similar to the stance of Jesus Christ in the context of Roman rule in Judea. King stands against bitterness and hatred and critiques both white moderates and black nationalists for their stance in hatred.

Key Questions:

1. Explain the distinction between "just laws" and "unjust laws," "just laws applied justly," and "just laws applied unjustly." Give specific examples!
2. What is the difference between "positive peace" and "negative peace"?

3. What is being an “extremist”? What kinds of things were Gandhi and Jesus “extremists” about?
4. In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, King is critical of white moderates, black separatists, and clergymen. Explain his criticism of one of these groups as thoroughly as you can.

Part III – Social and Economic Justice

6/24 – Race (Baun)

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, The Forethought, Chapter 1, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”

James Baldwin, “Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation”

In these readings both W.E.B Du Bois, a renowned scholar and prominent civil rights advocate, and the poet and activist James Baldwin, reflect on the devastating impact of racism on black and white Americans alike and the consequences for American society. Du Bois (1868-1963), a professor of history, sociology and economics at Atlanta University and one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, writes that the “problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line,” or the divide between black and white Americans that keeps the former from being full citizens and participants in American society. Rather than accepting permanent second-class status in return for educational and economic opportunities, DuBois fiercely advocates for full civil and political rights for black Americans. Likewise, Baldwin (1924-1987) writes, in the 1962 letter to his young nephew, of the poisonous legacy and impact of racism, “the crime of which I accuse my country and countrymen and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them.” Both Du Bois and Baldwin write of the tragic consequences of racism for black Americans, but also of how racism has corrupted, distorted, and limited white Americans as well and prevented American society from realizing its true potential. Interestingly, both remain optimistic that a transformation is possible and a more equal America can finally realize its founding ideals and, to paraphrase Baldwin, become what it must become.

Key Questions:

1. What is the “vast veil” that Du Bois says separates him and other black Americans from white society?
2. What is the “twoness” of black Americans that Du Bois writes about, and how does it confer on them a special “second-sight”?
3. Is Du Bois correct that the “Negro Problem” poses “a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic”? More than a century later, has it passed that test?
4. What is the impact of racism and prejudice on the lives of black Americans, according to Baldwin?
5. Why, according to Baldwin, are white Americans so reluctant to accept blacks as their equals?

6. What does Baldwin mean when he says that “we (black Americans) cannot be free until they (white Americans) are free”? What, according to Baldwin, will make white Americans free?
7. Compare the views of Du Bois and Baldwin to those of Douglass expressed in “The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro.” How are they similar? How are they different?

6/25 – Gender (James)

Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Convention
Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” (speech)
Jane Addams, “If Men were Seeking the Franchise”

The “Declaration of Sentiments” is a document essentially correcting the Declaration of Independence to include women and to emphasize their inalienable rights as citizens. It was written by a group of primarily white women in upstate New York in 1848. Compare it to “Ain’t I a Woman?” a speech given at the 1851 Women’s Rights Convention held in Akron, Ohio, by Sojourner Truth, who was born into slavery in New York state. The arguments for equality in these pieces can be connected directly with “If Men Were Seeking the Franchise,” in which Jane Addams imagines a parallel universe in which women rule, and men, denied political power, petition for the vote. Marshalling her arguments against letting such belligerent, irresponsible, greedy creatures like men share power, Addams notes the problem of industrialization and disregard for worker safety, and a tendency for men to go to war rather than use reason and negotiation.

Key Questions:

1. Discuss the strategy of using language from the “founding fathers” to include women’s rights.
2. In the description Truth gives of white women’s treatment compared to black women’s treatment, she describes how white women are often treated as delicate and put on a pedestal, while black women are expected to work. How has this affected the way that women are unified or not unified in the fight for women’s rights?
3. The early fight for women’s rights, especially the right to vote, has sometimes been criticized for not including women of color. Discuss how this might relate to voting rights and access to voting today.
4. Which conditions for women at this time in history were you unaware of? On your reading, does the Declaration make a convincing case for change?
5. Why do you think Sojourner Truth says that “white men will be in a fix pretty soon”?
6. Who is Addams’ audience?
7. What, in the end, is Addams’ criticism of men? It is fair? Is Addams dealing in stereotypes?

6/26 – Immigration: Who Belongs? (Baun)

Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus”
Saum Song Bo, “A Chinese View of the Statue of Liberty”
Randolph Bourne, “Trans-National America”

The United States is a land of immigrants, yet new immigrants have always faced prejudice, discrimination, and difficulty integrating into mainstream American society. This is even more

the case today for non-white immigrants, many from non-Western and non-Christian countries and areas of the world. These readings, written well before the current immigration debate, provide different perspectives on the promise and reality of America for immigrants attracted to its shores (or borders). Emma Lazarus' famous poem, originally written in 1883 and later placed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, radiates the promise of America's open and welcoming "golden door," portraying the United States as a land of freedom and opportunity for the world's poor and oppressed. This idealistic vision contrasts with the view of Saum Song Bo, whose 1885 letter to a missionary magazine expresses the bitter irony that the Statue of Liberty was erected only three years after passage of a law excluding Chinese from the United States, indicating that not all are welcome in America. Finally, the American writer and intellectual Randolph Bourne argues in his 1916 essay that the United States should abandon the ideal of the assimilationist "melting-pot," and instead should welcome and accommodate all immigrant nations and cultures into a diverse "international" or "transnational" nation. Contrasting his cosmopolitan vision for America with the tragic and backward nationalisms of Europe, Bourne argues that only through the adoption of a new form of (inter)national identity can the United States attain its full creative potential.

Key Questions:

1. Why is Saum Song Bo skeptical of the symbolism and supposed meaning of the Statue of Liberty, as expressed so powerfully in Lazarus' poem? Is he right to be so?
2. What does Bo mean when he says that only future generations will be able to judge whether the Statue of Liberty, or the statute (law) excluding Chinese from the United States, is the more lasting monument to the "liberty and greatness of this country"? From the perspective of 2022, which would you say is the more lasting monument?
3. Why does Bourne say that the United States has "no definitive native" or "distinctively American culture"?
4. In what sense does Bourne mean that the immigrant in America has not been free?
5. Why does Bourne argue against developing an American nationalism that merely emulates the traditional nationalisms of Europe? Why would this be a mistake?
6. From the perspective of today, how successful has America been in creating the "international" or "transnational" nation favored by Bourne? How would his cosmopolitan vision of national identity and citizenship be received in the immigration debate today?

6/27 – Economic Justice (James)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "The Economic Bill of Rights" (excerpt from January 1944 State of the Union address)

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Chapter 3

Roosevelt creates the Economic Bill of Rights as a way to recognize that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. The problem of economic inequality and insecurity is still with us today, as illustrated by Barbara Ehrenreich. Ehrenreich holds a PhD in cellular immunology but poses as a low-wage worker in three different jobs. She moves to a town with enough money for a down payment on an apartment, a car, and basic clothing, but no food and she finds a job as if she were someone that didn't have any work experience or

education. Her goal is to see if, at the end of one whole month, she has enough money to pay for a second month's rent in that location. She works as a maid, a care attendant in a retirement home, a waitress, and a Walmart employee. She finds a variety of difficulties in each case, including a lack of health care, physical exhaustion, and the high costs of laundry with few clothes. Her experience highlights the effects of socioeconomic class inequality and the lack of opportunity for people who are stuck living below the poverty line. She meets coworkers who either do not have cars, live in their cars, or suffer with medical conditions like abscesses in their mouths.

Key Questions:

1. What does it mean to be "middle class"? How can we tell who is a member of the middle class?
2. How does someone's family background, and their family's level of degrees earned, affect their educational experience?
3. Does the economic context in which people work have an effect on their opportunities and their chances to "move ahead" and avoid debt? How does it relate to how corporations like large stores treat their employees and their customers?
4. Discuss how having a major illness and medical bills can bring about bankruptcy for someone who is working in a low wage job in the service industry, like a server in a restaurant or a cashier in a store. How economically vulnerable is someone in those jobs?
5. What can a government do to provide some basic level of economic security for individual citizens? How do corporations work for or against this security?
6. Is it the government's responsibility to provide certain things to citizens? Which of the following would you agree or disagree should be provided by a government: Public defenders for people charged with crimes, school lunch programs, health care, education through college?