

Human Being and Citizen

Political Science 431

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Peter W. Schramm

pschramm@ashland.edu

Office: Ashbrook Center

by appoint. x5411

Home: 281-5340

Purpose of the Course:

This seminar attempts to come to grips with the great issues animating politics (justice, equality, happiness, liberty, friendship) from a much broader point of view than is generally the case. The title “Human Being and Citizen” most reflects these concerns because of its comprehensive character. A citizen is one who is rooted in the immediate circumstances of a particular time and place, in a particular political order. But a human being, as a human being, is more concerned about those things that make human beings more fully human. The problem may be summed up by a comment of Marcus Aurelius Antonius: “My nature is rational and social. My city and my country, so far as I am Antonius, is Rome, but so far as I am a human being, is the world.” With this in mind we will consider the peculiar and always fresh manifestation of this problem in the American political order and society. After all, our ancient faith tells us that the nature of our Union is primarily moral—one based on natural rights and consent—and only secondarily political. Do we not believe that the abstract truth of the Declaration of Independence is applicable to all men at all times? The United States of America seems to confirm the general eligibility of all human beings for citizenship. We connect the moral and the political.

Our focus this semester will be on manliness. Somehow, the concept—some thought it had died a generation ago with the last cowboy movie—has made a comeback. Perhaps the attack on 9/11 had something to do with it. The acts of courage around that event—from firefighters and cops to the citizen who said “let’s roll”—gave the idea of manliness a new appeal, and perhaps a new clarity. Courage is an essential political virtue and has to be of interest to anyone interested in politics. After all, we should remember that the Stars and Stripes wave over the home of “the brave.” The idea of courage and manliness were once contained in the same word. In Greek the word is “andreia.” The root of the word is “aner,” meaning man (and that is not the same as human being, which is “anthropos”). Among other things this seems to mean that manliness (like courage) refers to the virtue of a man, rather than merely the characteristics of a man. To the Greeks, we may assert, courage is above all the virtue of a man, and that a courageous man is not merely an excellent human being, but a manly man. Is this interesting? Yes, although probably not sufficient, in the end. And what does all this have to do with those other kinds of human beings, the women? And what does it have to do with politics and self-government? While the subject seems important, it may not be an exaggeration to say that it is filled with complications and the potential for indiscretions and indelicacies is massive. Our conversations and assertions about these things will require not only thoughtfulness, but prudence, which we can hope may also become a virtue attached to manliness.

Required Reading and Work:

Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness*

Owen Wister, *The Virginian*

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)

“The Searchers” (John Ford)

“The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence” (John Ford)

Course Requirements:

- I. SEMINAR DISCUSSION TOPIC: Each student will be assigned into a group of three or four others and each group will be assigned a chapter from Mansfield. Each student in the group will report on some aspect of that topic, to be determined by the students in the group. Thus there will be one seminar discussion topic assigned to each student; each group will make an oral presentation of no more than thirty minutes. The seminar discussion topic will be due throughout the first part of the semester, assignments will be made during the first meeting of the class. The seminar discussion topic, combined with class participation, will be worth 30% of your grade.
- II. TERM PAPER: A term paper (circa 8-12 pages) will be due the last day of class; topics will be determined by the sixth week of class. The paper will be an analytical paper focusing on either *Manliness* or *The Virginian*. This is not a so-called research paper. An analytical paper is interested in the substance and the logic of the author’s arguments and in their historical, political, and philosophical meaning. It is the thought of the author that we aim to analyze. You must try to understand the author as he understood himself. Your reference books for papers will be Turabian, and Strunk & White. The term paper will be worth 50% of your grade. Remember this about writing:

“Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.” Or, as Churchill said: “Short words are best and old words when short are best of all.”
- III. FINAL EXAMINATION: There will be a two-hour final examination on the two films. The final exam will be worth 20% of your grade.
- IV. PARTICIPATION: This is an upper division seminar. Participation is not optional and it will be graded. Your participation in class discussion will be worth 30% of your grade (this includes the seminar discussion topic and presentation, see I, above).

Order of readings:

- I. Tocqueville: 2 3.8-14, 558-581;
- II. Mansfield
- III. Wister
- IV. “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence”
- V. “The Searchers”