*The Mind of Madison*

William F. Buckley, Jr. Program

October 17-19, 2018

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Description

This seminar series explores the political thought of James Madison. Emphasis will be placed on Madison’s most intensive philosophical years, viz., the Founding period from 1786 to 1792. More than any other American Founder. Madison is considered responsible for the republican theory that informs the American Constitution. What was his theory of republicanism?  Does Madison’s theory of rival and competing interests mean that "shrewd institutional arrangements" can serve as a substitute for a virtuous citizenry, or did he believe that a virtuous citizenry is necessary for the success of republican government?  Was Madison a nationalist or a states’ righter?  In general, was he a consistent thinker throughout his life, or did he change his mind fundamentally from the days he wrote *The Federalist*with Alexander Hamilton to the years of close association with Thomas Jefferson and the establishment of the Republican party in the 1790s?  What, ultimately, were the driving concerns and deepest aspirations of James Madison?  Is his understanding still relevant today?

Readings

Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, Ed. by Clinton Rossiter. Intro. by Charles Kesler (NY: Penguin Books). ISBN #978-0-451-52881-0

Selected Works of James Madison, <http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>

Selected Works of Robert Frost, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poems/45684>

Some Secondary Source Essays, Recommended Only

Martin Diamond, "Ethics and Politics" in Robert Horwitz, ed., *Moral Foundations of the American Republic* (University of Virginia Press, 1986). ISBN-10: 081391082X

William Allen, “Justice and the General Good: *Federalist* 51 in Charles R. Kesler, ed., Saving the Revolution (Free Press, 1987). ISBN-10: 0029197309

### Alan Gibson, "Veneration and Vigilance: James Madison and Public Opinion, 1785–1800," in Review of Politics, 67:01, Winter 2005. (Including Matthews’ and Sheehan’s responses).

### Colleen Sheehan, “The Commerce of Ideas and Cultivation of Character in Madison’s Republic,” in Bradley C. Watson, ed., *Civic Education and Culture* (ISI Books, 2006). ISBN-10: 1932236619

Schedule

1. Topic: “Social Compact Theory; Power, Right, and Majority Rule”

Readings: “Memorial and Remonstrance,” “Vices of the Political System of the United States.” <http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>

Focus: What is a social compact? What gives it authority? Are there any conditions upon which the social compact is based? Are there any limitations on the scope of the government established by the social compact?

2. Topic: “The Problem of Faction”

Readings: *Federalist* 10

Focus: What is a faction? What is Madison’s proposed remedy for the problem of majority faction? What are the characteristics of republican government? Is republican government genuinely popular government?

3. Topic: “Governmental Structure: The Practicable Sphere”

Readings: *Federalist* 14, 20, 37, 39, 44-46.

Focus: What is the nature of the American “union”? Where does sovereignty reside in the United States? What is the proper size of a republic, according to Madison -- and why?

4. Topic: “Representation and Responsibility”

Readings: *Federalist* 47-51, 57, 62, 63

Focus: What is the purpose of separation of powers? What is the role of the representative in the American political system? Is the system Madison envisioned designed to rely on “shrewd institutional arrangements” that channel selfish interests and passions to achieve the low but solid ends of the modern commercial republic? Or does it depend on the “better sorts” of men, rather than the formation of civic character? Or does it depend, ultimately, on the character of the citizenry? Is the political system Madison envisioned and contributed so much to designing consistent or inconsistent with the form and spirit of popular, republican government?

5. Topic: “The Early 1790s: Republicans v. Federalists”

Readings: “Consolidation,” “Charters,” “Parties,” “Government of the United States,” “Republican Distribution of Citizens,” “Property” <http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>

Focus: Madison was the philosophic leader of the “republican cause” that became the Republican Party in the United States. In 1791-92 he published a string of articles in Freneau’s *National Gazette*, setting forth his understanding of republicanism and his criticism of “anti-republicanism.” What were the essential elements of Madison’s political thought? What was the disagreement between Republicans and Federalists in the early 1790s about?

6. Topic: “The Early 1790s: Madisonian Republicanism”

Readings: “Spirit of Governments,” “Public Opinion,” “British Government,” “Who are the Best Keepers of the People’s Liberties?” “The Union: Who are its Real Friends?” <http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>

Robert Frost, “The Gift Outright,” “Birches,” “The Road Not Taken”. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poems/45684>

Recommended: Letter of Hamilton to Edward Carrington; Madison Memoranda, N. P. Trist, Montpelier, 27 September 1834.

Focus: What is Madison’s republican vision as expressed in the Party Press Essays? Did he change his mind from the late 1780s to the early 1790s, as Hamilton alleged? What, if anything, is the central idea that animated the mind of Madison?