

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
CONSERVATISM

Terms and concepts to know:

Conservatism	Traditional conservatism (social)
Laissez-faire conservatism (economic)	<i>Noblesse oblige</i>
Edmund Burke / <i>Reflections...</i>	Evolutionary vs. revolutionary
David Hume	Reason and observation
Kirk / <i>The Conservative Mind</i>	Lippman / <i>The Public Philosophy</i>
Michael Oakeshott	Same-sex marriage
Leo Strauss and neoconservatism	

Study and discussion questions:

1. Discuss the various forms of conservatism and how the American hybrid developed from Europe. Examine the concept of *noblesse oblige* and discuss why it did not take root in the U.S.
2. Examine the philosophy of Edmund Burke and debate the advantages of accepting evolutionary change as opposed to revolutionary. Do you believe that “change should be gradual and consistent with a nation’s past”?
3. Discuss Kirk’s “ten tenets of traditional conservatism.” Which of the ten do you find legitimate? Are there any that you find “too conservative”?
4. Jack Hunter argues that “[t]he Republican Party of 2025 is now the political home of dissent, challenge, and hope that a system as broken as ours can be fixed.” But what are the Republicans actually dissenting against? Or challenging? What does Hunter mean when he talks about the “status quo.” Do Republicans actually present a challenge to that, however defined?
5. If conservatives are skeptical about reason, how can they criticize society?
6. Under what circumstances should people attempt to overturn the existing political system?
7. Describe what Roberts perceives as the ‘neoconservative threat to IR. Do you agree with his interpretation?
8. Is compassion a necessary trait for a conservative? How would you analyze Olmstead’s concerns? Do you agree with his position? Why or why not?

Readings:

Hoffman and Graham: Chapter 9 and WEB.

Video:

Thomas Sowell: Dismantling America.