

5/15/47

The Democratic Tradition in the  
United States

PROPOSED LECTURES AND SEMINARS BY BENJAMIN F. WRIGHT

1. An introductory lecture dealing with the nature of democracy as it has been expressed in American political and constitutional thought. Attention will be directed to the paradoxes and contradictions - or apparent contradictions - to be found in this tradition, e.g., equality and discrimination, natural rights and privilege, freedom of speech and intolerance, majority rule and constitutional limitations, social justice and rugged individualism.
2. Four lectures (two weeks) on the basic writings in American political thought - The Federalist and Jefferson's Collected Writings. Each pair of lectures will be supplemented by a seminar. In both the lectures and the seminars these works will be made the focii for discussions of the philosophy of the period which was at the same time the product of generations of Anglo-American development, the most creative period in American democratic thought, and the point of departure for nearly all subsequent political and constitutional thought in the United States.
3. Four lectures (two weeks) in which an attempt will be made to interpret the major themes in the growth of American democratic thought since Jefferson. Each pair of lectures will again be supplemented by a seminar or discussion period. The topics dealt with will include continuity and change, the expansion of popular power and the growth of judicial review, the nature of American constitutionalism, varieties of individualism, nineteenth and twentieth century doctrines of social justice.