The lessons we draw from history depend on what we regard as the main theme of history. Professor Ralph Raico, as the leading classical liberal historian of our time, believes that the main theme is also the most neglected: the rise of liberty against the despotism of the state.

In pursuing this theme in this wonderful classroom course, Raico is taking up a project initiated by the brilliant 19th century historian Lord Acton, and variously pursued by great scholars such as Mises, Hayek, and Rothbard. Raico discusses the origin of the idea of liberty, its growth, its friends and enemies throughout history, and its possible future.

As Raico makes clear, the history of liberty is intertwined with the history of Europe and its outposts—the Europe that has been sometimes defined as extending from Warsaw to San Francisco. Raico argues that the idea of liberty arose specifically in Western Christendom for geographic, intellectual, ideological, and theological reasons. He discusses the events, ideas, debates, and institutions that were crucial in the process of creating the “European miracle” of the most astonishing advance of civilization in history.
Throughout this 10-lecture course, Raico draws attention to literature, personalities, and events that made the difference. Most importantly, Raico discusses the origin and effects of what Ludwig von Mises called the “primordial thing: the idea of freedom from the state.” The roots of this idea extend far back into the middle ages and the early centuries of Christianity. They came to fruition in the Industrial Revolution, which is vigorously defended, and were never more assaulted than in the French and Bolshevik Revolutions. The relationship between liberty and empire is also discussed, with special reference to the problem of American imperialism.

This course would be enormously valuable in any time, but it is especially essential in ours when the theme of liberty has been so neglected in scholarly literature and the popular press. This course serves as an antidote to what many have learned in their colleges and universities, which have demonized the history of Europe as one long period of exploitation and genocide. The best response to this calumny, Raico shows, is a detailed survey of the ideas, peoples, technologies, achievements, not in order to dismiss the crimes of the men of power but to draw attention to the rare accomplishments of the idea of liberty itself.

Ralph Raico, professor of European history at Buffalo State College, and Schlarbaum laureate, is the author of a history of German liberalism, Die Partei der Freiheit, and such articles as “World War I: The Turning Point” and “Rethinking Churchill” in the The Costs of War. Raico has a gift for presenting history in a manner that is authoritative, clear, calm, and systematic, but also rich in detail and filled with moral passion. They are graduate-level lectures that can also be of enormous valuable for anyone from high school to lifetime learners of any age. This is a set of lectures to treasure and learn from again and again.

Supplemental to:

History: The Struggle for Liberty
An Extended Seminar with Ralph Raico
Books on the Meaning and History of Liberty
by David Gordon

The following reading list includes about 125 books, useful for understanding liberty and the system of individual enterprise. It emphasizes, with a few exceptions, modern rather than historical works. It makes no claim to be comprehensive and is nothing more than an introduction to a vast literature. Only books currently in print have been included.


_______. *When in the Course of Human Events* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). An excellent defense of the Southern view of the Civil War. Lincoln does not fare well. The comparison of Charles Dickens and John Stuart Mill on the Civil War is especially well done.


Aristotle. *Ethics and Politics*. These basic works set the foundation for all later Western moral and political thought. Rothbard’s natural rights libertarianism draws heavily on certain Aristotelian themes, while rejecting others.


Bastiat, Frédéric. *Economic Sophisms* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1964). This includes some of Bastiat’s classic satirical essays attacking protective tariffs and other interventionist measures. He stresses the unseen results of laws designed to “help” various groups.

_______. *The Law* (Los Angeles: Phamphletters, 1944). Criticizes planners who regard people as material to be molded into a pattern; Hayek took up this line of thought in *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944).


Benson, Bruce. *The Enterprise of Law* (San Francisco: Pacific Research Institute, 1990). Almost everyone argues that protection must be provided by a state that holds a monopoly of force. Benson subjects this belief to withering assault. Law and protection have often in history been secured by private means.


Burckhardt, Jacob. *Reflections on History* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1979). The great Swiss historian indicts power as evil. For this he was bitterly criticized by Carl Schmitt and the Nazi intellectual historian Christoph Steding.
Chesterton, G.K. *What’s Wrong With the World?* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1920). Chesterton uses his immense gift for paradox to show the fallacies of those in revolt against the natural order. He refuted contemporary feminism in advance of its birth.


Creveld, Martin van. *The Rise and Decline of the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). An erudite work by a leading military historian, who argues that the state is a historically limited phenomenon that is due to be supplanted.


Epstein uses the law of takings to develop an important legal argument that sharply limits government action.


Friedman, Milton, and Rose D. Friedman, *Free to Choose* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, [1979] 1980). These two books present a Chicago School defense of a relatively free market. Although Austrians will disagree with a number of points, the books offer valuable criticisms of licensing and other interventionist policies.


Hayek, Friedrich von, ed. *Capitalism and the Historians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954). One of the most frequent arguments of opponents of capitalism is that the Industrial Revolution worsened the condition of the British working class. Hayek, W.H. Hutt, and others refute this convincingly.


The Road to Serfdom (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1944] 1945). One of the most famous of all defenses of classical liberalism. Hayek shows that socialist thinkers wish to impose their values on others. “Advanced” thinkers led the way to totalitarianism.

Hazlitt, Henry. Economics in One Lesson (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, [1962] 1975). The lesson, not at all easy for policy makers to learn, is that interference with the free market has indirect consequences, usually of a disastrous sort.


Herbert, Auberon. The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State and Other Essays (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1978). Herbert, a follower of Herbert Spencer, extends the law of equal freedom more consistently and radically than his mentor.


Hummel, Jeffrey R. Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War (Chicago: Open Court, 1996). Hummel argues that war was not needed to end slavery and defends the right of secession.

Hutt, W.H. The Keynesian Episode: A Reassessment Episode (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Press, 1979). A devastating criticism of the Keynesian system, based on wide knowledge of the literature. Though Hutt’s style is difficult, he makes acute points not found elsewhere.


Jones, Eric. *The European Miracle*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Why did Europe develop economically, in a way unlike any other region before the eighteenth century? Jones shows that free institutions are a large part of the answer.

Jouvenel, Bertrand de. *On Power: The Natural History of Its Growth* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1993). De Jouvenel traces the growth of the state, showing that democracy often leads to increased control over the individual. The treatment of Rousseau is especially good.


Knight, Frank H. *Selected Essays by Frank H. Knight: “What Is Truth” in Economics?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Two volumes. Although Knight was by no means a supporter of laissez-faire capitalism, his depth and ability to find problems with standard arguments for socialism and interventionism make him must reading. Volumes include *Laissez-Faire: Pro and Con* and “What is Truth” in Economics.


Livingston, Donald. *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume’s Pathology of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). In the course of a comprehensive study of Hume, Livingston provides the best discussion of the right to secession that I have read.


McDonald, Forrest. *States’ Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio, 1776–1876* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002). McDonald shows that the United States was established as an association of states. With some dissent, it was so regarded until Lincoln and the Civil War changed things.

Mencken, H.L. *Mencken Chrestomathy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949). A collection of Mencken’s mordantly funny articles. Thorstein Veblen and other targets were never the same when Mencken had finished with them.


_______.*Liberalism: A Socio-Economic Exposition* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1978). Mises argues that classical liberalism is the path to peace. Conflicts among nationalities can be resolved in lasting fashion only by rigid restriction of the scope of the state.


_______.*Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, [1969] 1981). Mises’s calculation argument poses a challenge that socialism cannot meet. Not content with this fatal blow, Mises raises all manner of other critical points. After he is through, nothing of socialism is left standing.


_______.*The Theory of Money and Credit* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, [1950] 1980). A thorough treatment of monetary theory. The money regression theorem shows that money must have begun as a commodity. Mises strongly defends the gold standard as a means of monetary reconstruction.

Nisbet, Robert. *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom* (London: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1990). Nisbet argues that the modern state has worked to destroy all institutions that stand between it and the individual. Rousseau is a chief villain.


Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993). This criticism of mass man is an indictment of much of twentieth-century political thought.


Raimondo, Justin. *Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement* (Burlingame, Calif.: Center for Libertarian Studies, 1993). Raimondo shows convincingly that William Buckley and other cold warriors derailed American conservatism, so far as foreign policy is concerned. The Old Right favored peace and nonintervention.


________. *An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought*, 2 volumes (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar, 1995). Rothbard’s brilliant intellectual history is perhaps his greatest scholarly contribution. He stresses the Spanish scholastics and gives an outstanding analysis of the religious presuppositions of Marxism, among much else. Volumes include *Classical Economics* and *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*.


Power and Market (Menlo Park, Calif.: Institute for Humane Studies, 1970). A comprehensive classification and analysis of all types of interference with the free market. Rothbard originally intended it to form part of Man, Economy, and State; combined with Man, Economy, and State (Scholar’s Edition; Auburn, Ala. Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2004).


On the Edge of Anarchy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). These four books are a neglected resource for classical liberal thought. Simmons argues that Lockean moral theory is soundly based. Lockean
arguments cannot be used to justify government; and anarchy, or something close to it, is the proper upshot of Locke’s thought. All major arguments designed to justify political obligation fail.

Smith, George. *The Lysander Spooner Reader* (San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1992). Spooner, a key nineteenth century individualist, razes to the ground social contract arguments for the state.


_______. *The Quest for Cosmic Justice* (New York: Free Press, 2002). Contemporary leftist thought is engaged in a futile effort to remodel the world. Economics teaches us the need to limit our goals, by making us aware that all action involves choice and cost.


Sumner, W.G. *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1974). Sumner calls attention to the “Forgotten Man,” who must pay for harebrained schemes by which some endeavor to “do good” for others.

Tullock, Gordon. *The Economics of Income Redistribution* (Norwell, Mass.: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). Tullock shows that the actions of supporters of massive redistribution to the poor belie their words. People are unwilling to redistribute large amounts of income to their own detriment, and plans to do so usually have some ulterior end.

Weaver, Richard. *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). The brilliant defense of property rights is more important than Weaver’s attempt to find the root of modern evil in medieval nominalism.


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David Gordon is a senior fellow at the Mises Institute, and the author/editor of *The Mises Review*. He was educated at UCLA, where he earned his Ph.D. in intellectual history, and is the author of *Resurrecting Marx; The Philosophical Origins of Austrian Economics; Critics of Marx*; and *An Introduction to Economic Reasoning*. He is also editor of *Secession, State, and Liberty*. Dr. Gordon’s articles have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* and the *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*. 

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