

NATIONAL REVIEW INSTITUTE

REGIONAL FELLOWS PROGRAM

National Review Institute (NRI), founded by William F. Buckley Jr., is the sister 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization of National Review. NRI complements the mission of NR by supporting the efforts of the magazine. Each year NRI selects dozens of impressive mid-career professionals in key metropolitan areas—including Washington, D.C., New York City, and Dallas—to participate in its Regional Fellows Programs. In each city chapter, 20-25 Fellows attend eight dinner seminars on the foundations of conservative thought. The seminars are based on a syllabus crafted by noted academic and NRI board member Daniel J. Mahoney of Assumption College. Fellows complete 25- to 30-page reading assignments from foundational texts—from Burke to Buckley—for each seminar, which are personally led by the movement’s leading thinkers. Those who complete the program are prepared to think clearly about the principles of a free society and apply them effectively to the issues of our day.

SESSION

I

“WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. & AMERICAN CONSERVATISM”

For sixty years, William F. Buckley Jr. was the voice of a conservatism that managed to be both sober and combative, committed to permanent verities, and dismissive of a corrupt liberal orthodoxy. He brought style and intellectual penetration to conservatism as it emerged as a coherent movement after World War II. *National Review*, founded by Buckley and a cohort of friends in 1955, was—and remains—the flagship journal of a thoughtful American conservatism. This first session is dedicated to the thought and journalism of WFB and his role in shaping modern American conservatism.

READINGS: Six WFB columns from the anthology *Athwart History*.



SESSION

II

“THE FOUNDERS’ CONSTITUTION”

The United States is that rare country whose nationhood is coextensive with her constitutional arrangements. The “philosophy” of the American Constitution is laid out with remarkable learning, penetration, and insight in the Federalist papers (1787-1788) written by Madison, Hamilton, and Jay. Any thoughtful American conservatism will aim to “conserve” the constitutional heritage bequeathed by our constitutional Founders.

READINGS: Federalist # 10, 51, 84 and Charles Kesler’s Introduction to the Signet Classic edition of *The Federalist Papers*.

SESSION

III

“HAYEK & THE RULE OF LAW”

The rule of law is the foundation, the pediment, of a free society. This section will explore Friedrich Hayek’s vision of a “constitution of liberty” centered on the rule of law. The threats to the rule of law from the administrative state will also be highlighted.

READINGS: Selections from Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty*, select articles on tort reform and corporate governance.

SESSION

IV

“BURKE, PRUDENCE, & THE SPIRIT OF CONSERVATISM”

The great eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish statesman and political philosopher Edmund Burke was in important respects the father of modern conservatism. A champion of the American cause and a panegyrist to English liberty, he saw the great evils at work in the French Revolution and in modern ideology, more generally. An evocative writer and rhetorician, he defended reform, not revolution, and what can be called a “politics of prudence.” He was the enemy par excellence of abstraction in politics, of an appeal to abstract ideas that ignores circumstances, the wisdom of the ages, and settled tradition.

READINGS: Selections from Edmond Burke’s *Reflections of the Revolution in France* and Yuval Levin’s *The Great Debate*.

SESSION

V

“CONSERVATISM, LIBERTARIANISM, & FUSIONISM”

Contemporary conservatism has been marked by an enduring tension between a “conservative” defense of tradition and moral virtue (and of legitimate government authority) and a “libertarian” emphasis on the dangers of statism and the need for an expansive realm of personal freedom. Where some see an enhancement of human freedom, others see the erosion of the crucial moral and cultural prerequisites of a free society. These readings will also explore efforts to “fuse” traditionalism and libertarianism that were near and dear to *National Review* over the years. One reading deals with the decidedly “unconservative” thinking of Ayn Rand whose thought remains influential in some libertarian circles.

READINGS: “Uneasy Cousins” by Robert Nisbet, “What is Libertarianism?” by Murray Rothbard, “The Twisted Tree of Liberty” and “Libertarianism or Libertinism?” by Frank Meyer, and “Ayn Rand: Engineer of Souls,” by Theodore Dalrymple.

SESSION

VI

“MEDIATING STRUCTURES BETWEEN THE STATE & THE INDIVIDUAL”

The best conservative thought opposes radical individualism (which erodes the “mediating structures” between the state and the individual) in the name of those associations and groupings that give shape and form to human liberty. Alexis de Tocqueville famously praised Americans for their prodigious “art of association,” their remarkable capacity to form voluntary associations between the state and the individual. Contemporary conservative thinkers such as Robert Nisbet, Richard John Neuhaus, and Peter Berger have drawn on Tocqueville’s wisdom to show how “mediating structures” can renew community and “empower people,” and in the process act as a check on state power.

READINGS: “To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy” by Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus and “On the Use that Americans Make of Association in Civil Life” by Alexis de Tocqueville.

SESSION

VII

“CONSERVATISM, DEMOCRACY & FOREIGN POLICY”

Americans have grown war-weary and tired of military engagements abroad. Yet America has vital interests and an abiding commitment to the survival of western civilization. The readings in this session explore the necessity for American foreign policy to combine spiritedness and moderation and to avoid the twin pitfalls of democratic crusadism and escape from our responsibilities in the world.

READINGS: Selections from Angelo Codevilla’s *To Make and Keep Peace among Ourselves and All Nations*, including the introduction by Victor Davis Hanson.

SESSION

VIII

“THE CONSERVATIVE SPIRIT & CIVIC GRATITUDE”

The American Dream is imperiled today by social breakdown and economic stagnation. The first reading for this session emphasizes fidelity to “ancient moorings” and resistance to encroaching statism, the second reminds us of our debts to the past and the need to cultivate a spirit of gratitude and civic obligation. Together, they capture the spirit of conservatism as William F. Buckley Jr. understood it.

READINGS: WFB’s “A Growing Spirit of Resistance” from *Let Us Talk of Many Things* and “The Patrimony and Civic Obligation” from *Gratitude*.

Seminar discussion leaders include an array of local nonprofit, academic, and public policy leaders as well as respected intellectuals from around the country such as Charles Kesler, Victor Davis Hanson, David Bobb, Jonah Goldberg, Richard Brookhiser, and many others.

For more information about participating in the Regional Fellows program, please contact NRI’s External Affairs Manager, **Katie Poedtke**, at katie@nrinstitute.org or 202-827-4102. To learn more about NRI’s other programs, including its Policy Fellows, William F. Buckley Jr. Fellowships in Political Journalism, and Regional Partnership Events, visit www.nrinstitute.org.

The National Review Institute was founded by William F. Buckley Jr. in 1991, 36 years after he founded *National Review* magazine. The Institute is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), charitable organization, established to complement its sister organization, National Review, by engaging in policy development, public education, and advocacy to advance the conservative principles Mr. Buckley championed. www.nrinstitute.org