

21H.181

Libertarianism in History

Reading Response 2: The Role of “History” in Libertarian Theory

We will soon have finished our survey of the classic modern libertarian texts: Constant, Mill, Hayek, the Friedmans, and Nozick, to which one could add Martin Luther King, Jr. and others.

Take some combination of two of the following four authors: Hayek, the Friedmans, Nozick, and MLK. What is the role of "history" (defined as the human history that has transpired in the decades and centuries prior to the authors' own time) in their theories? How do they use (or not use) the past? What problems does the weight of the past raise for their understandings of liberty in the present day (the time in which they themselves were writing)?

Your selection of the two authors should involve some kind of contrast (i.e., you should not simply conclude that they have the same or essentially similar relationship to past experience). Your response should also make some use of the readings on slavery and antislavery from Part Two of the course.

Responses (200-300 words) due by Session 14.

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