

Exploring the theory and history of liberty

The Cato Institute Launches Libertarianism.org

On November first, the Cato Institute launched Libertarianism.org, a major new project focusing on the theory and history of liberty. These ideas—the intellectual underpinnings of libertarianism—have always guided and informed the work of Cato’s scholars. Libertarianism.org brings them to the fore, using Cato’s established platform to promote the philosophy of liberty.

“Libertarianism is more than a set of policies about education, health care, defense, and trade,” said Aaron Ross Powell, the site’s editor. “Behind those, providing their foundation, are ideas and history, the writings and actions of great men and women who have argued and fought for liberty.” The mission of Libertarianism.org, he said, “is to express and discuss those ideas directly.”

The project provides a new way of promoting the principles Cato was founded upon, presenting them to an audience interested in libertarianism not just as a guide to policy, but as a system of political thought. It will broaden the support base for libertarian ideas and organizations and ready a generation of young minds to fight for individual liberty, free markets, and peace.

The resources produced and assembled for Libertarianism.org reflect the best educational path for students and scholars of liberty to gain an introduction to the libertarian tradition and its major works and thinkers. Visitors to the site will be able to use its introductory essays and videos to broaden their understanding of both the philosophy of freedom and its role in shaping the modern era, while regular readers interested in exploring further will benefit from annotated reading lists of new books and established classics, including some of the most potent and intriguing critiques of libertarianism.

The site also includes an archive of old and new publications, a blog discussing libertarianism both as an abstract philosophy and as a way of understanding today’s

headlines, and much more.

Libertarianism.org hosts a massive online library of streaming and downloadable videos, including exclusive appearances by major thinkers such as F. A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, Roy Childs, Murray Rothbard, and George H. Smith. Smith is also authoring an essay series for the site called “Excursions into the History of Libertarian Thought.”

With the video series “Exploring Liberty,” Libertarianism.org offers a com-

prehensive, college-level course on the theory, history, and practice of liberty. The first two lectures in this ongoing series, available both as streaming video and as audio-only downloads, feature Cato executive vice president David Boaz providing an introduction to libertarianism and senior fellow Tom G. Palmer discussing the history of liberty. Other original video content includes “The Libertarian View,” a series of short videos on topics such as the libertarian reaction to poverty, and whether we are freer today than in the past.

Also available soon for free download from Libertarianism.org is *Learning about Liberty: Cato University Home Study Course*, a 30-hour audio series introducing the great minds and great ideas of the libertarian tradition.

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with 'Introduction', 'History', 'People', 'LIBERTARIANISM', 'Media', 'Publications', and 'Blog'. The main header reads 'The LIBERTARIAN LIBRARY' with the subtitle 'Essays, books, and other publications on the theory and history of liberty.' Below this is a search bar and social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and RSS. The featured article is 'Myths of Individualism' by Tom G. Palmer, dated September 6, 2011. The article text begins: 'It has recently been asserted that libertarians, or classical liberals, actually think that "individual agents are fully formed and their value preferences are in place prior to and outside of any society." They "ignore robust social scientific evidence about the ill effects of isolation," and, yet more shocking, they "actively oppose the notion of "shared values" or the idea of "the common good." I am quoting from the 1995 presidential address of Professor Amitai Etzioni to the American Sociological Association (American Sociological Review, February 1996). As a frequent talk show guest and as editor of the journal *The Responsive Community*, Etzioni has come to some public prominence as a publicist for a political movement known as communitarianism.' Below the article is a 'COMMENTS: 0' section and a footer note: 'Etzioni is hardly alone in making such charges. They come from both left and right. From the left, *Washington Post* columnist F. I. Dionne

The Cato Institute has introduced a major new platform for advancing the principles on which the organization was founded. With the launch of Libertarianism.org, visitors have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the intellectual basis for the philosophy of freedom, as well as its role in shaping today’s headlines. The site features a collection of resources—including new and classic videos, essays on great classical liberals and libertarians, electronic versions of out-of-print works, book reviews, recommended reading lists, and much more.

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“The Cato Institute has long been seen as the world’s premier advocate of libertarian public policy,” said Powell. “With Libertarianism.org, we have the opportunity to explore libertarianism at a deeper level, and introduce people to the principles of liberty that, through application, become those policies.” ■