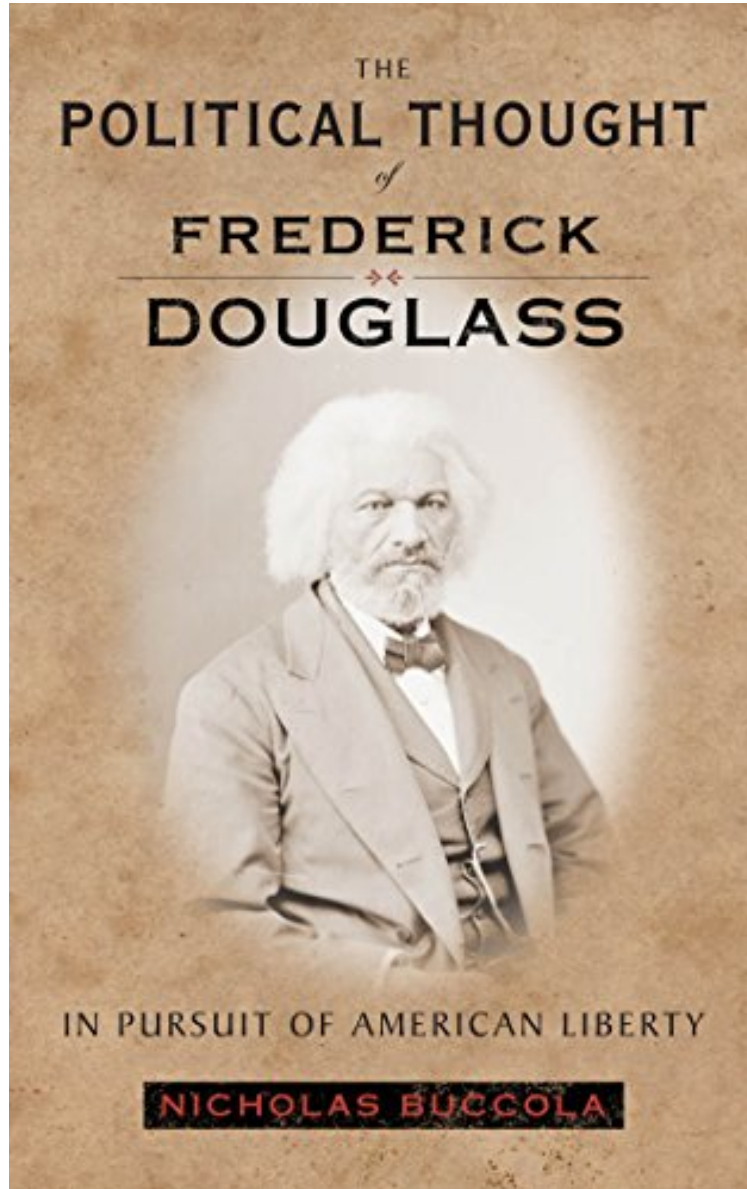


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The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass: In Pursuit of American Liberty

Nicholas Buccola

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2013 Finalist, 26th Annual Oregon Best Book Award Frederick Douglass, one of the most prominent figures in African-American and United States history, was born a slave, but escaped to the North and became a well-known anti-slavery activist, orator, and author. In *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, Nicholas Buccola provides an important and original argument about the ideas that animated this reformer-statesman. Beyond his role as an abolitionist, Buccola argues for the importance of understanding Douglass as a political thinker who provides deep insights into the immense challenge of achieving and maintaining the liberal promise of freedom. Douglass, Buccola contends, shows us that the language of rights must be coupled with a robust understanding of social responsibility in order for liberal ideals to be realized. Truly an original American thinker, this book highlights Douglass's rightful place among the great thinkers in the American liberal tradition. Podcast Nicholas Buccola on Frederick Douglass and Liberty.

Nicholas Buccola's well-conceived, well-researched, and well-argued new study stands out in an increasingly crowded field of work on Frederick Douglass. Displaying a thorough familiarity with Douglass's published and unpublished works and an impressive erudition in his command of pertinent scholarship, Buccola makes a balanced, judicious, innovative case for Douglass's enduring vitality, in particular as a guide for both liberals and communitarians in their ongoing debates about individual rights and civic obligations.-Peter C. Myers,author of *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism*"Nicholas Buccola's recent monograph is a welcome addition to the growing field of scholarship devoted to Frederick Douglass. In particular, Buccola's study takes Douglass from the margins of political philosophy and establishes him as an important and original contributor to the liberal political tradition By refusing to oversimplify Douglass's thought and by allowing its religious, humanitarian, and communication themes to emerge, Buccola argues convincingly in his final chapter not only for the complexity of Douglass's thought but also for its potential to speak to issues that continue to confront liberal political theory and practice."-Cynthia R. Nielsen,*The of Politics*"Buccola offers a nuanced portrait that illuminates both Douglass and his place in American intellectual history."-Damon W. Root,*Reason Magazine*"Douglass seems to have been a much more thoughtful, nuanced political thinker and "agitator," as he sometimes called himself, than we are used to today. He offered vibrant political and moral arguments, not sound bites. Buccola helps us understand how and why those arguments proved to be so powerful."-Santa Clara Magazine"Looking broadly and deeply into Douglass's reflections on the requisites and moral purposes of liberal democracy, Buccola amplifies our understanding of Douglass's normative political imagination and skillfully demonstrates that Douglass also appreciated how a free society is nurtured and sustained by a moral ecology of personal courage, moral responsibility, and civic virtue.-Thomas A. Spragens, Jr.,author of *Civic Liberalism: Reflections on Our Democratic Ideals*"Nicholas Buccola's rich study of Frederick Douglass recognizes that the natural law teachings of the Declaration provided one of several foundations for Douglass' political thought."-Mark A. Graber,*Tulsa Law* "This is a well-written, incisive work that illuminates Frederick Douglass as an activist and political philosopher."-CHOICEFrederick Douglass was a slave, abolitionist, and activist whose most enduring contribution to American history may have been his liberal political theory. Douglass drew on his experiences as a slave to articulate a version of liberalism that contained the basic Lockean, liberal elements but also promoted an ethic of mutual responsibility. That ethic was the basis for Douglass's devotion to community, democracy, and state intervention to create a suitable moral ecology for liberal citizens. It was also a platform for expressing his distrust for gross inequalities issuing from the marketplace. *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass* provides insights not only into Douglass's nineteenth-century theory; it serves as a roadmap for navigating ongoing tensions that persist in twenty-first-century liberalism.-Mark E. Kann,author of *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy*About the AuthorNicholas Buccola is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Linfield College.