Course Overview

In the 1830’s Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States and wrote a two volume account of his observations about politics and society in this country. One of his purposes was to explain to Europeans the ways in which the Americans dealt with the problems that arose in a democracy. This course will review his observations about the American system of that time in order to better understand the theoretical origins of the American political system and the ideas that have motivated the changes that have occurred in that system since the 1830s. It will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of the political theory that motivated Tocqueville analysis.

Course requirements:

1. Eleven quizzes on the required reading will be given; the student’s nine best quizzes will be counted. Together these nine quizzes will account for 65% of course grade. A quiz administered on a day a student is absent from class can be made up during office hours held before the next class meeting, but not after that time.

2. Two short papers (500 to 600 words in length) will be required. Each paper will account for 7.5% of the grade. Together they will account for 15% of the grade.

3. A final exam will account for the remaining 20% of the grade.

Required texts:

There are three required textbooks. Other required reading will be available on the class’s Blackboard Electronic Resources site or in hyperlinks embedded in the syllabus. The required texts are:

Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville translated by George Lawrence

The Righteous Mind: Why good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt

The Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay
ISBN: 9780451528810

The amount of time a student should expect to spend on this class:

This class meets for 150 minutes each full week of the semester. That time is direct instruction time. The University policy is that a student should expect to spend another 300 minutes or 5 hours of independent learning time. As the schedule below indicates, there is about 100 pages of reading per
week. Much of this reading is from a time when styles of writing were more complex than they are today. It is expected that the student will engage in actively reading these texts by (among other strategies) asking questions of the text and monitoring one's understanding of the arguments being presented. Such reading will usually require an average time of about 2 to 3 minutes per page. Additional time will need to be spent reviewing the materials for the quizzes and for the final exam and preparing the two short papers.

Learning objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify the ideas of Alexis de Tocqueville,
- specify ways in which those ideas have been used by others to attempt to deal with subsequent problems that have confronted American government,
- express in their own words the relevance (or lack of relevance) of Tocqueville’s ideas to contemporary problems,
- identify aspects of American life in the 1830s that are similar to aspects of American life today and aspects that are different.

Grading scale:

An “A” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 91 or better. An “A-” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 88 but less than 91.

A “B+” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 85 but less than 88. A “B” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 81 but less than 85. A “B-” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 78 but less than 81.

A “C+” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 75 but less than 78. A “C” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 71 but less than 75. A “C-” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 68 but less than 71.

A “D+” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 65 but less than 68. A “D” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 61 but less than 65. A “D-” will be awarded if the student achieves an average of 58 but less than 61.

Tentative Course Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1. Introduction: Tocqueville’s stated purposes in writing Democracy in America and why that work became influential (1/17 and 1/19).

- Class procedures and requirements explained
- Discussion of Tocqueville’s “Author’s Preface to the Twelfth Edition,” Democracy in America (pages xiii, xiv)
- Discussion of "Author’s Introduction" in Democracy in America (pages 9 -20)
- Discussion of Haidt’s The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion: Introduction (Pages xvii to xxiv)
- First Quiz (1/26).

- Second Quiz (2/2).

- Third Quiz (2/9).

Week 5. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*: Volume One, Part I, Chapters 1-6 (2/14 and 2/16)
- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 9 to 105).
- Discussion of Federalist Papers numbers 1 and 78.
- Fourth Quiz (2/16)

- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 106 to 170).
- Discussion of Federalist Papers numbers 10, 14, 15 and 39.
- Fifth Quiz (2/23)

Week 7. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*: Volume One, Part II, Chapters 1-6 (2/28 and 3/2)
- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 171 to 245).
- Discussion of Federalist Papers numbers 62 and 84.
- Sixth Quiz (3/2)

Week 8. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*: Volume One, Part II, Chapters 7-9 (3/7 and 3/9)
- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 246 to 315).
- Discussion of Madison’s “Against Religious Assessments”
- Discussion of Federalist Papers numbers 47, 48, 49, and 51.
- Seventh Quiz (3/9)

- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 316 to 413).
- Discussion of James Madison’s Letter to Daniel Webster of March 15, 1833.
- Discussion of Abraham Lincoln’s Speech on the Dred Scott Decision.
- Eighth Quiz (3/23)

- Discussion of *Democracy in America* (pages 417 to 500).
• Discussion of Federalist Papers number 37.
• Ninth Quiz (3/30)

Week 11. Tocqueville, Democracy in America: Volume Two, Part II (4/4 and 4/6)
• Discussion of Democracy in America (pages 502 to 558).
• Discussion of Washington’s “Farewell Address.”
• Tenth Quiz (4/6)

Week 12. Tocqueville, Democracy in America: Volume Two, Part III (4/11 and 4/13)
• Discussion of Democracy in America (pages 561 to 664).
• Due: First Short Paper (4/13)

Week 13. Tocqueville: Democracy in America, Volume Two, Part IV (4/18 and 4/20)
• Discussion of Democracy in America (pages 665 to 703).
• Discussion of Madison’s National Gazette article, “Universal Peace.”
• Eleventh Quiz (4/20)

• Discussion of some recent article that claims to make use of an insight from Democracy in America yet to be chosen.
• Due: Second Short Paper (4/27)

If necessary, Make-up Days will be scheduled the week of April 30.

Final Exam: (The date and time are subject to change by the University)