Alexis de Tocqueville and the American Republic

My aim in writing [my] book was . . . to teach democracy to know itself.—Alexis de Tocqueville

With its piercing observations, uncanny predictions, and judicious judgments about all things American and democratic, Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America has come to be regarded by many as both “the best book ever written on democracy and the best book ever written in America.” But Democracy in America is much more than a book about politics, and contains nothing less than a comprehensive investigation of the effects of democracy on the human soul. This course will examine the lessons we still have to learn from Tocqueville about our country, our regime, and ourselves.

Daily Schedule:


Thursday, January 10:  Democracy in America, I.i.3-4 (p. 74-97); Charles Loyseau, selection from A Treatise on Orders (Moodle).

Tuesday, January 15:  Democracy in America, I.i.5-7 (p. 98-185).


Tuesday, January 22:  Democracy in America, I.i.8 (p. 186-276).

Wednesday, January 23: Paper I (2 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.

Thursday, January 24:  Democracy in America, II.i.1-4, chapter 5, p. 313-359 only (p. 277-359).

Tuesday, January 29:  Patrick Deneen class visit; Deneen, “The Only Permanent State” (Moodle).

Tuesday, January 29:  Lecture by Patrick Deneen, University of Notre Dame (Title TBA, 4:30, Watkins Room, Attendance Required)

Thursday, January 31:  Democracy in America, II.i.5, end, 6-7 (p. 360-426).

Tuesday, February 5:  Democracy in America, II.i.8-9 (p. 427-514).

Wednesday, February 6: Paper II (2 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.
Thursday, February 7: Democracy in America, foreword to Volume III, III.i.1-8 (p. 690-762). Descartes, Discourse on Method, parts I and II (Moodle).

Tuesday, February 12: Democracy in America, III.i.9-15 (p. 763-817). Emerson, “The Over Soul” (Moodle).

Thursday, February 14: Democracy in America, III.i.16-21 (p. 818-870).


Wednesday, February 20: Lecture by James W. Ceaser, University of Virginia, “Tocqueville’s World and Ours,” (4:30 pm, Watkins Room, Attendance Required)


Tuesday, February 26: Democracy in America, III.ii.14-20 (p. 948-985).

Wednesday, February 27: Paper III (2 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.

Thursday, February 28: Democracy in America, IV.iii.1-17 (p.987-1092); Friedan, “The Problem that Has No Name” (Moodle).

Spring Break

Tuesday, March 12: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books III.6-IV; Franklin, Autobiography, Selection (moodle).


Thursday, March 14: Robert Faulkner Class Visit, Faulkner, “The Case for Greatness” (Moodle).

Tuesday, March 19: Democracy in America, IV.iii.18-26 (p. 1093-1186).

Wednesday, March 20: Paper IV (2 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.

Thursday, March 21: Democracy in America, II.ii.10 (p. 515-582 only).

Tuesday, March 26: Democracy in America, II.ii.10 (p.582-627 only); John C. Calhoun, “Speech on the Reception of the Abolition Petitions” and “Speech on the Oregon Bill” (Moodle).

Thursday, March 28: Abraham Lincoln, “Letter to Pierce,” “Address to Congress in Special Session, July 4, 1861,” “Gettysburg Address,” “Second Inaugural Address” (Moodle)

Tuesday, April 2: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet.”
**Wednesday, April 3:** Lecture by Diana Schaub, Loyola University Maryland, “Tocquevillian Perspectives on Slavery,” (4:30 pm, Watkins Room, Attendance Required)

**Thursday, April 4:** Diana Schaub Class Visit. Schaub, “Our Favorite Frenchman,” “On the Character of Generation X” (Moodle)

**Tuesday, April 9:** Diana Schaub, “On Slavery,” “Solve for X” (Moodle)

**Thursday, April 11:** No Class (Furman Engaged); **Paper V (2 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.**

**Tuesday, April 16:** *Democracy in America*, I.I,10, (p. 627-657 only); IV.iv.1-4 (p. 1191-1220).

**Thursday, April 18:** *Democracy in America*, IV.iv.4-8, (p. 1221-1285).

**Friday, April 19:** Final Paper Proposal (1 page, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.

**Tuesday, April 23:** Conclusion

**Monday, April 29:** Final Paper (10 pages, maximum) due by 12:00 noon to Johns 111JA.

**Required Texts**


*Note: you may use either the two-volume, English only edition of this text, or the four-volume, facing-page English and French edition.

All other texts are accessible in PDF on the course Moodle site. Please print them and bring them to class; binding them together in a large notebook is strongly suggested.
**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Requirements**

1. **Four short papers**: During the term, five short papers will be assigned; you must write four of them. Papers must be no longer than 2 pages, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins (line spacing is up to you). These papers should be organized, compressed, and polished.

2. **Term Paper**: At the end of the term, you will write an essay that rewrites and greatly expands one of the short papers you have written over the course of the term. This paper should draw broadly from the semester’s readings—Tocqueville, our other primary source materials, and the secondary literature provided by our guest lecturers. Your ten-page (maximum) response will be due on **Monday, April 29, at 12:00 noon**.

3. **Class Participation**: Perfect attendance in class and at guest lectures with no active participation earns a C for class participation. The addition of regular participation earns a B; frequent, helpful, intelligent participation earns an A. After 2 unexcused absences, every further absence results in the loss of one partial letter grade (B becomes B-, B- becomes C+, and so on).

**Grade Composition**

- **Short Papers**: 4 papers, 12.5% each \( \times 4 = 50\% \)
- **Term Paper**: \( \times 40\% \)
- **Class Participation**: \( \times 10\% \)
- **Total**: \( \times 100\% \)

**Grade Scale**

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Grade Values: 4.0, 3.7, 3.3, 3.0, 2.7, 2.3, 2.0, 1.7, 1.3, 1.0, 0.7, 0.0
Tocqueville Program Guest Lecturers

Patrick Deneen is David A. Potenziani Memorial Associate Professor of Constitutional Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He holds a B.A. in English literature and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Rutgers University. From 1995-1997, he was Speechwriter and Special Advisor to the Director of the United States Information Agency. From 1997-2005, he was Assistant Professor of Government at Princeton University. From 2005-2012, he was Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University, before joining the faculty of Notre Dame in the Fall 2012. His books include The Odyssey of Political Theory, Democratic Faith, Democracy's Literature, The Democratic Soul, and Redeeming Democracy in America.

James W. Ceaser is the Harry F. Byrd Professor of Politics at the University of Virginia, where he has taught since 1976. He has written several books on American politics and political thought, including Liberal Democracy and Political Science, Designing a Polity: America's Constitution in Theory and Practice, and Nature and History in American Political Development. He has also written many articles for both scholarly and popular publications. Professor Ceaser has held visiting professorships at the University of Florence, the University of Basel, Oxford University, the University of Bordeaux, and the University of Rennes. He received his B.A. from Kenyon College and his Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Robert Faulkner is Professor of political science at Boston College. He is author of The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and Its Critics, Francis Bacon and the Project of Progress, Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England, and The Jurisprudence of John Marshall. He has also co-edited two books, America at Risk and Marshall's Life of George Washington. Faulkner was a Marshall Scholar at Oxford and has held fellowships from the Ford, Mellon, Earhart, and Bradley foundations and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He earned his B.A. from Dartmouth College, his M.A. from Oxford University, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Diana Schaub is professor of political science at Loyola University Maryland and a member of the Hoover Institution's Jill and Boyd Smith Task Force on the Virtues of a Free Society. She has received the Richard M. Weaver Prize for Scholarly Letters and served as a member of the President's Council on Bioethics. She is the author of Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu's Persian Letters, and co-editor of What So Proudly We Hail: The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song. Her many articles have appeared in such publications as The New Atlantis, National Affairs, Commentary, First Things, The American Interest, and City Journal. She earned an A.B. from Kenyon College and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.