

Constitutional Principles: Core Texts
GOV 312P (Unique #38380)
Fall 2023
PAR 303, MWF 10:00 – 11:00
Final Exam: Friday, December 8, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is a study of the basic principles of American political life: Democracy, equality, and liberty. Through a close reading of core texts of the American political tradition, we will attempt to see how these ideals took hold in the US, what arguments were made on their behalf, and what possible pitfalls there are for a society dedicated to those ideals. We will also be looking at the ethical questions involved when leaders seek to put those ideas into practice.

The course will proceed entirely through a close reading of primary sources. There will be units on John Locke and the basic principles of liberal democracy, on the ratification debate, on Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and on race. The class will close with a study of Abraham Lincoln's political thought, which will also be an occasion for a comprehensive reflection on the main themes of the course.

This class carries a "Cultural Diversity in the US" flag. In our unit on race, we will explore African American political thought by reading the writings of Frederick Douglass, Booker T Washington, WEB Du Bois, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin, Albert Murray, Ibram X Kendi, and Glenn Loury. We will see how they wrestled with the question of what American principles mean to people who have suffered under slavery.

This class also carries an "Ethics" flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations. We will do this by thinking about the difficult political and ethical questions faced by figures like the Founders, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, WEB Du Bois, Martin Luther King, and Abraham Lincoln.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING RUBRIC

First Paper: 25%

Second Paper: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Short Writing: 10%

Attendance and Quizzes: 10%

Final exam. There will be a cumulative final exam given on **Friday, December 8, from 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM**. The final exam will include quote identifications, short answer questions, and essays. We will discuss this further in class.

Papers. There will be two papers assigned in this class, with a length requirement of 1000-1200 words. Papers will be graded both on substance and on the quality of the writing. The shorter papers are due **October 30** and **November 29**. We will distribute each paper topic on Canvas at least 13 days before the paper is due.

You may rewrite your papers. If you rewrite, your final grade will be calculated as a weighted average of your first grade (counts once) and the grade of your revised paper (counts twice). Rewrites will be due two weeks after the paper is returned.

Short writing assignments. There will be three short writing assignments. There is a short paper due on **September 11**. Also, when you turn in papers (including the short paper), you will write a review of another student's paper that will be due the following week. We will give additional instructions about these in class. Each of the four short writing assignments will be worth $\frac{1}{4}$ of this portion of your grade.

Attendance and Quizzes. Attendance is **required** at every class meeting. You get two unexcused absences with no immediate penalty. **After that, for every class you miss, your attendance and quiz average will drop by 10% (which is equal to 1% of your final grade).** Having more than 8 unexcused absences—including the first two, for which there is no other penalty—will result in automatic failure of the course. If you are feeling sick, stay home. We encourage you all to err on the side of caution. You are required to email me with the subject heading “Absence” to let me know that you are missing class, but we will excuse any health-related absence, and will not require a doctor’s note.

There will be pop quizzes at the beginning of many classes—roughly once per week. These will be quizzes on the reading for that day, and they are meant to be easy if you have done the reading. If you have an excused absence, you will be allowed to make up the quiz. If you have an unexcused absence, you will not be able to make up the quiz. Quizzes will take place at the beginning of class, so be sure to be on time.

Your attendance and quiz grade will be calculated as your quiz average, minus whatever penalty you incur for missed classes.

Class participation. This is a discussion intensive class, and you are expected to come to every meeting having done the readings and prepared to offer your thoughts and interpretations of them. You can improve your grade by as much as 1/3 (say, from B to B+) through excellent participation.

Extra Credit Opportunity. Among other things, in this class, we would like to help foster an atmosphere of civil discourse and respectful discussion. We will be sponsoring some public debates in the evenings that are related to the course content. If students in the class come and speak at the debates, we will offer some extra credit in the class. We will announce these opportunities in class.

GRADING POLICY

We will use the plus / minus grading system for this class. Quizzes, tests, and attendance will be graded numerically. Papers and participation in discussion sections will be given letter grades. In order to calculate your final grade, these will be translated into number grades as follows:

A: 97; A-: 91; B+: 88; B: 84.5; B-: 81; C+: 78; C: 74.5; C-: 71; D: 65; F: 30

Grades in between two letters grades count as the average of those two grades—an A-/B+ is an 89.5, for instance. Final grades are calculated numerically, then translated into a letter grade using the following scale. **Please note: grades will not be rounded up! You need a 93.5 average to get an A.**

A: 93.5-100; A-: 90-93.5; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-80; C: 73-77; C-: 70-73; D: 60-70; F: below 60.

REQUIRED TEXTS

It is important that everyone have the assigned editions of every reading in order to cite the texts properly in your papers. You are required to have copies of all the books for this class. Please note that electronic editions will not be allowed. You should have a paper copy of each book, and you are required to purchase the course packet.

1. Course Packet, available from Document Solutions in GSB
2. John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*. Croft Classics. ISBN 0882951254.
3. Hamilton, Madison, Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. Introduction by Charles Kesler, edited by Clinton Rossiter. Signet Classics. ISBN 0451528816.
4. Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Harvey Mansfield. The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0226805360.
5. Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Signet Classics. ISBN 0756967104.
6. Booker T Washington. *Up From Slavery*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486287386.
7. WEB DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486280411.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

These readings may be subject to change. We will announce changes during class and post them on Canvas. Assignments listed as “CP” can be found in the course packet. Assignments from Tocqueville are listed by Volume, Part, and Chapter; e.g., II.2.8 is Volume II, Part 2, Chapter 8.

August 21: Introduction, with excerpt from Aristotle and Declaration (CP)

August 23: John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1-2

August 25: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 3-4

August 28: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 5

August 30: Locke, Chapter 6: Sections 52-58 only; Chapter 7: All (Sections 77-94); Chapter 8: Sections 95-100 and 119-122

September 1: *Second Treatise*, Chapter 9-14

September 4: LABOR DAY

September 6: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 15-18

September 8: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 19

September 11: Constitution of the United States (in *Federalist* volume; Preamble and Articles I-VII only); Federalist 1-2 (**short paper due**)

September 13: Federalist 6, 8-9, 11

September 15: Federalist 10, and excerpt from Washington's Farewell Address (CP) (**short paper review due**)

September 18: Federalist 37, 48, 49, 51

September 20: Federalist 52, 53, 55

September 22: Federalist 84; Bill of Rights readings (CP)

September 25: Readings on Religion (CP)

September 27: Readings on Religion ctd (CP)

September 29: Readings on Education (CP)

October 2: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction

October 4: Tocqueville, I.1.3

October 6: Tocqueville, I.1.2

October 9: Tocqueville, I.2.1 and 7

October 11: Tocqueville, I.2.8

October 13: Tocqueville, I.2.9

October 16: Tocqueville, I.2.9 continued

October 18: Tocqueville, Volume II "Notice" (pp. 399-400), II.1.1-4

October 20: Tocqueville, II.2.1-5

October 23: Tocqueville, II.2.8-14

October 25: Tocqueville, II.4.6-8

October 27: Tocqueville, Continued

October 30: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (19-128) (**first paper due**)

November 1: Douglass, Early Selections from Douglass (CP)

November 3: Douglass, Fourth of July Speech (CP) (**paper review due**)

November 6: Booker T Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 1-11, 57-64, 79-81, 105-115, 156-157 (last three paragraphs only), plus selections in CP

November 8: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Forethought, Chapters 1 and 3; and "The Talented Tenth" (CP)

November 10: Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races” (CP), *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 6

November 13: Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech (CP)

November 15: Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet?” (CP)

November 17: James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and Albert Murray, excerpt from *The Omni-Americans* (posted on canvas)

THANKSGIVING WEEK

November 27: Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans*

November 29: Ibram X Kendi and Glenn Loury, essays (to be posted on canvas) (**second paper due**)

December 1: Abraham Lincoln, speeches (CP) (**paper review due**)

December 4: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart” (CP)

December 8, 10:30 AM. – 12:30 PM: Final Exam

OTHER POLICIES

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Academic dishonesty: Academic dishonesty will be treated extremely seriously. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. The university’s Honor Code, with information on the meaning of academic integrity, is found at the following website:

<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/>

Accommodations for religious holidays: If anyone needs to miss class for a religious observance, I will hold a make-up session for you and the absence will be excused. If anyone misses a religious observance for class, they can take it up with their god.