

Constitutional Principles: Core Texts

Fall 2022

GOV 312P (Unique #: 38375)

Room: MEZ 1.212

Time: MWF, 10:00am – 11:00am

Final Exam: Monday, December 12, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Instructor: Samuel Mead

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30pm – 5:00pm

Course Description

Citizens of American liberal democracy live under the oldest codified constitution in use today. Yet the age of a constitution does not permit us to take its principles for granted. Far from it. Each of us, in one way or another, is deeply shaped by these principles – in what we admire and detest, praise and blame, fear and love, in our opinions on the mundane and the lofty alike. Therefore, if we wish not to take our opinions for granted, if we wish to achieve genuine self-knowledge, and if we are to be responsible democratic citizens, we must engage in a searching and thoughtful analysis of the theoretical basis for the American Constitution and the ways of life it fosters and requires. Such an analysis is all the more necessary today; liberal democracy now draws criticism not only from abroad but also from home on both sides of the political spectrum. If we are to meet those criticisms adequately, we owe it to ourselves to recover the original intention of those who shaped our regime. This course is designed to help students begin such a recovery.

We will focus on the fundamental principles of American political life: democracy, equality, and liberty. Our guides – a select few authors of the American political tradition's foundational texts – will show us how these principles took hold in the US and what arguments were made for and against them. Our authors will not always agree with each other – they will even vehemently disagree. But from their agreements and disagreements alike, we can begin to recover for ourselves those crucial questions informing our country, and hopefully start on the path towards genuine intellectual liberation.

This class carries “Ethics” and “Cultural Diversity in the US” flags. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. It should therefore come as no surprise that a substantial portion of your grade will come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations. “Cultural Diversity in the US” courses are designed to familiarize you with the distinctive experiences of marginalized groups in the US. A substantial portion of the readings and writing assignments will require you to consider how American political principles look to Black Americans.

COURSE OUTLINE

Our course begins with a brief consideration of Aristotle’s classical conception of politics, and a comparison between that conception and the Declaration of Independence.

We will then turn to John Locke, whose *Second Treatise of Government* is one of the deepest theoretical defenses of liberal democracy, and whose *Letter Concerning Toleration* is the most famous early-modern defense of religious toleration. We will then consider *The Federalist Papers*, wherein we will encounter powerful arguments for key features of the American Constitution and, at the same time, the first great attempt to apply Lockean principles in a political founding. Afterwards, we will briefly attend to the Anti-Federalist’s thoughtful and public-spirited challenge to the Federalists.

Having glimpsed the theoretical basis for the spirit of the American Constitution and the rich political arguments for its ratification, we will move to Tocqueville’s critical but friendly observations on American democracy and the psychology of its citizens during the U.S.A’s early years.

We will then spend a quarter of the course studying Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., and James Baldwin. We will focus on their different evaluations of the meaning and import of American political principles to a people enslaved for a third of this country’s history. We will compliment this unit with our brief, penultimate unit on Abraham Lincoln.

The course will close with a reading of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and a comprehensive reflection on the thinkers we will have studied.

CLASSROOM POLICY

The following are the rules of classroom conduct:

- You are required to have a physical copy of every book. E-readers are not allowed in class.
- **Turn off and put away all cell phones before class begins.** Texting during class is a violation of class rules. **If you are caught texting during class, it will count as an unexcused absence.**
- Use of laptops during class is not permitted. Please store your laptops before class begins.
- **Do not eat in class.** If your schedule is such that you feel you must eat, see me.
- Do not pack up before I have dismissed class. If this is a problem for you, see me.
- Treat one another respectfully. Do not be dismissive of students' contributions to class discussions.
- I reserve the right to give you an unexcused absence for behavior that is distracting or disrespectful to your peers and/or myself.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING RUBRIC

The most important requirement is that you show up ready to discuss the readings. There is a lot of reading for this course, but it is worth all the time and effort you can put into it. You can learn something important from everything we read.

30% — Final Exam, closed book. Date and Time: Monday, December 12, 1:00pm – 3:00pm.

The exam will consist of essays selected at random from study questions handed out at least two weeks beforehand. The exam will cover material from the entire term.

50% — Two papers (25% each). Each paper will have a length requirement of 1200-1500 words and will be worth 25% of your overall final grade. Papers will be graded both on substance and on the quality of the writing. The papers are due October 14th and November 18th. I will distribute each paper topic on Canvas at least 13 days before the paper is due.

You will turn your paper in via Canvas. BUT: When you turn in your papers, **you should bring one hardcopy with you to class.** You'll exchange this copy with another student and you will write reviews of one another's papers.

Late papers will lose 10% per day after the deadline

Long paper rewrites: You may rewrite your long papers, but I expect extensive work to be done on them. If you rewrite, I will grade the revised paper, and your final grade will be an average of

your new grade and your original grade. NB: When you turn in your revised paper, if I have given you a hard copy of your graded paper, you *must* turn in this original paper with my markings on it, or your new paper will not be graded. Also, it is possible to receive a lower grade on your new paper.

10%—Short writing assignments.

There will be three short writing assignments. There is a short paper (500 words) due September 16th. This will make up half of your short writing assignments grade.

Late papers will lose 10% per day after the deadline

You will also write a review of another student's paper each time you turn in a long paper (2 reviews total). The reviews will be due on the Monday after the paper is due. These two reviews will make up the other half of your short writing assignments grade.

Late papers will lose 10% per day after the deadline

10%—Class participation and attendance. 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 grade will drop by 10%, which means that your overall final average will drop by 1%.** 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. I will excuse absences if you have a serious reason for missing class, such as illness or a religious observance, but you should consult with me as early as possible.

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. Your participation will be graded with the same rigor as the other parts of the course. You do not automatically receive a perfect participation grade if your attendance is perfect.

Packing up early is a distraction both to me and your fellow students. I will end each class by 10:50am. In return, I expect you to refrain from packing up early. While any breach of the class rules enumerated above might earn you an unexcused absence, **I will ruthlessly enforce the rule against early packing up. If you do this, I will treat it as an unexcused absence.**

Grade Calculation – Papers and exams will be given letter grades. In order to calculate your final grade, these will be translated into number grads as follows:

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

I will often use grades like A/A- to indicate a numerical grade between the two letter grades. So, A/A- is a 94 and B-/C+ is a 79.5.

Final grades will be awarded on the following scale. I will round up grades; a 93.9 is an A. I will use the following grade scale for final grades:

A 92.5-100; A- 89.5-92.5; B+ 86.5-89.5; B 82.5-86.5; B- 79.5-82.5; C+ 76.5-79.5; C 72.5-76.5; C- 69.5-72.5; D+ 66.5-69.5; D 62.5-66.5.; D- 59.5-62.5; F 0-59.5

OFFICE HOURS

I will hold office hours on **Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30pm – 5:00pm at Waggener 401E.** If for some reason these times do not work for you, please email me, and I will be happy to set up a time when we can meet.

REQUIRED TEXTS

You are required to own *paper copies* of all the books for this class. With the exception of the course packet, which should be available at the McCombs UT Document Solutions kiosk, you can buy these books from wherever you like. The location of the pickup for your Course Packet is subject to change – if it is changed, I will notify you. As for your books, there should be copies at the Co-Op, but since the Co-Op often understocks course materials, I'd suggest using Amazon, AbeBooks, or another online book retailer.

1. Course Packet, available at the McCombs UT Document Solutions kiosk (pickup location subject to change)
2. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Edited by Ian Shapiro. Yale University Press. ISBN 0300100183
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 0451529947
6. Booker T. Washington. *Up From Slavery*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486287386
7. W.E.B. DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486280411

READING SCHEDULE

Mon, Aug. 22: Course Introduction; Aristotle's *Politics* and Declaration of Independence (Found in the "Files" section of Canvas)

Wed, Aug. 24: John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1-4

Fri, Aug. 26: Lock, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 5

Mon, Aug. 29: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 6: Sections 52-58 only; Chapter 7: all (Sections 77-94); Chapter 8: Sections 95-100 and 119-122

Wed, Aug 31: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Continued

Fri, September 2: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 9-14

Mon, September 5: LABORE DAY – no class

Wed, September 7: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 19

Fri, September 9: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 23-3 (end before "*In the last place...*")

Mon, September 12: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 35-46 (end before "The *Articles* of Religion are ...")

Wed, September 14: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 46-56 (end at "Farewell")

Fri, September 16: Federalist 1-2, 39

Short Paper due at the beginning of class on September 16

Mon, September 19: Federalist 6, 8-9, 11

Wed, September 21: Federalist 10, and excerpt from Washington's Farewell Address (CP)

Fri, September 23: Federalist 37, 48, 49, 51

Mon, September 26: Federalist 52, 53, 55

Wed, September 28: Anti-Federalist Reading (CP)

Fri, September 30: Federalist 84; Bill of Rights readings (CP)

Mon, October 3: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction

Wed, October 5: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.1.3

Fri, October 7: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.2.1, I.2.7

Mon, October 10: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.2.9

Wed, October 12: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II “Notice” (399-400), II.2.1-3

Fri, October 14: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.2.4-7

First Paper due 11:59 PM on October 14

Mon, October 17: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.2.8-9

Wed, October 19: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.2.10-17

Fri, October 21: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.2.18-20

Mon, October 24: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.4.6-8

Wed, October 26: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Continued

Fri, October 28: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.2.10, pages 302-307 and 326-348 only

Mon, October 31: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (19-128)

Wed, November 2: Douglass, Early Selections from Douglass (CP)

Fri, November 4: Douglass, Fourth of July Speech (CP)

Mon, November 7: Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 1-11, 57-64, 79-81, 105-115, 156-157 (last three paragraphs only), plus selections in CP

Wed, November 9: W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Forethought, Chapters 1 and 3; and “The Talented Tenth” (CP)

Fri, November 11: Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races” (CP), *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 6

Mon, November 14: Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 14

Wed, November 16: Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech (CP)

Fri, November 18: James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village” with excerpts from “Down at the Cross” (to be posted on canvas as a pdf)

Second paper due at 11:59 on November 18

FALL BREAK/ THANKSGIVING – back in class Monday, November 28

Mon, November 28: Abraham Lincoln, Men’s Lyceum Address (CP)

Wed, November 30: Lincoln, “House Divided” and Seventh Lincoln-Douglass Debate (CP)

Fri, December 2: Lincoln, Selections; Douglass, “Oration” (CP)

Mon, December 5: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart: Commencement Address Delivered at Harvard University, June 8, 1978” (CP) and Course Conclusion

Final Exam:

Date and Time: Monday, December 12, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Location: TBA

Additional 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: Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. The university's Honor Code, with information on the meaning of academic integrity, can be found here:
<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/>

Accommodations for religious holidays: If you need to miss class for a religious observance, please email me. I will excuse your absence and we will make arrangements to keep you updated with the course material. If you miss a religious observance for class, you may take it up with your god.