

**Constitutional Principles: Core Texts**  
**GOV 312P (Unique #06610, #37215)**  
**Fall 2024**  
**GAR 0.120, MWF 09:00 – 10:00**  
**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 Montesquieu 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, 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 **TBD**. 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 and 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 some classes—at most 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. *Two Treatises of Government*. 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 0756967104.
6. Booker T Washington. *Up From Slavery*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486287386.
7. WEB Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486280411.

August 26: Introduction, with excerpt from Aristotle and Declaration (CP)

August 28: John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1-2

August 30: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 3-4

September 2: LABOR DAY

September 4: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 5

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

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

September 11: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 15-18

September 13: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 19

September 16: Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (CP)

September 18: Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (CP)

September 20: Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (CP)

September 23: Constitution of the United States (in *Federalist* volume; Preamble and Articles I-VII only); *Federalist* 1-2 (**short paper due**)

September 25: *Federalist* 6, 8-9, 11

September 27: *Federalist* 10, and excerpt from Washington's Farewell Address (CP) (**short paper review due**)

September 30: *Federalist* 37, 48, 49, 51

October 2: *Federalist* 52, 53, 55

October 4: *Federalist* 84; Bill of Rights readings (CP)

October 7: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction

October 9: Tocqueville, I.1.3

October 11: Tocqueville, I.1.2

October 14: Tocqueville, I.2.1 and 7

October 16: Tocqueville, I.2.8

October 18: Tocqueville, I.2.9

October 21: Tocqueville, I.2.9 continued

October 23: Tocqueville, Volume II "Notice" (pp. 399-400), II.1.1-4

October 25: Tocqueville, II.2.1-5

October 28: Tocqueville, II.2.8-14

October 30: Tocqueville, II.4.6-8

November 1: Tocqueville, Continued (**first paper due**)

November 4: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (19-128)

November 6: Douglass, Early Selections from Douglass (CP) (**paper review due**)

November 8: Douglass, Fourth of July Speech (CP)

November 11: 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 13: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Forethought, Chapters 1 and 3; and “The Talented Tenth” (CP)

November 15: Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races” (CP), *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 6

November 18: Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech (CP)

November 20: Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet?” (CP)

November 22: James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and Albert Murray, excerpt from *The Omni-Americans* (posted on canvas)

November 25: Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans*

November 27: Ibram X Kendi and Glenn Loury, essays (to be posted on canvas) (**second paper due**)

## THANKSGIVING WEEK

December 2: 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.