

The University of Texas at Austin
Liberal Arts Honors, Government Honors & Core, Texts and Ideas

LAH351J/GOV379/CTI325 “Regime Perspectives on American Politics”

Jeffrey K. Tulis
Spring 2023

Meets: Mondays 3-6pm, MEZ 1.212

Office Hours: 1-2pm Mondays, MEZ 3.152

Canvas page: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1362124>

Email: tulis@austin.utexas.edu

This is a seminar on American politics and culture. Two purposes govern the selection of texts for the course and guide our discussion of them. All of our texts attempt to look at American politics as a *whole*. Most books and courses on America look at only a part, such as the Presidency, or elections, or popular culture. Here we attempt to think about how the parts of America fit together. Even when these texts speak about a part, for example an institution such as the presidency or the Congress, they present the topic from a vantage point on the whole polity. To see the polity as a whole also means that we will have to revisit and rethink aspects of our political life that we take for granted – that we don’t examine because those parts have become so natural or familiar to us. Seeing the polity whole enables us to render the familiar unfamiliar, to make what we take for granted strange and new.

To see the polity as a whole requires that we get some distance from our subject, much as to see the planet earth as a whole requires one to look at it from outer space. Just as it is difficult to get visual perspective on a place living within it, it is difficult to understand the promise or pathologies of a regime from within. To get critical distance from our politics, we will closely study three sets of texts that look at American politics from a distance. The first part of the course will recover the perspective of the founding debate between Federalists and Anti-federalists. This fundamental debate reveals what is at stake in the basic architecture of the American regime. The second part of the course is a close study of Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. Regarded by many as the best book ever written on democracy and the best book written on America, Tocqueville sees our polity whole because he looks at it from the vantage point of Europe, in general, and France, in particular. In the third part of the seminar we think about American politics from the perspective of thoughtful commentators who feel only nominally included in the polity. We focus on one of the most impressive black American thinkers. Half in and half out of the polity, this extraordinary statesman, Frederick Douglass, reveals fissures and fault lines in the American regime.

Medical Protocol

As we transition from the COVID pandemic to still challenging endemic circumstances in which respiratory viruses remain a public health problem – please take care to follow these guidelines:

- 1. Take care of your own personal health! Don’t hesitate to use UT medical facilities and counseling if you need it, including mental health counseling.**
- 2. If you feel ill, or if you have a cough, or if you have a fever do not come to class. Stay home and get well. There will be no grade penalty. Out of consideration for your classmates, please do not come to class if you have a persistent cough, even if it is due to allergies. If you are able, please submit the online reader response comments described below.**

3. COVID RESOURCES:

- UHS provides [symptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) for students. Schedule your appointment by calling 512-471-4955 or online within the [MyUHS patient portal](#). Learn more about [symptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) here.
- Disposable masks are available for students at the William C. Powers, Jr. Student Activity Center and the Texas Union hospitality desks.
- The [exposure action chart](#) offers guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 or if you test positive. If you experience symptoms, stay home, isolate, and follow instructions for symptomatic in the chart.
- Stay up-to-date on [COVID-19 vaccinations](#) by getting all available boosters when eligible. Vaccines are available through University Health Services, including Flu vaccines.

Requirements:

Three take home analytic essays, chosen from a list of topics, each weighted 25% of the course grade.

OR as an option: you may write two short essays with the best of those two counting 25% of your grade and do a longer 15 page paper on a topic of your choice, in consultation with me, which will be weighted 50% of your course grade. Government honors students who are thinking of doing an honors thesis next year may prefer this option to begin to develop research and writing skills for longer work. Students who prefer this option will need to have discussed with me their topic for their long paper by April 1. The paper will be due April 24.

Regular attendance and informed participation in the seminar is a vital component of the course and will be weighted 25% of the final grade. Every student should prepare a short, one or two paragraph “reader response” before each class meeting and circulate it to the entire class via “Canvas.” Also, every student is expected to elaborate or respond to a post of at least one other fellow student. So to be clear: at least two posts every week (more is fine) on our Canvas discussion board. Each initial post needs to be submitted by 5pm on Friday. And the response posts to fellow students need to be posted by 5pm on Sunday.

One or two students will be designated as the agenda maker for each week. The agenda makers will be responsible for reflecting upon the set of reader responses, constructing an agenda of topics for discussion, introducing the agenda with a short presentation, and assisting me in guiding the discussion for that class meeting during the second half of each week’s class meeting.

Students who responsibly attend to their agenda leading responsibilities, regularly contribute reader responses, and who miss no more than two classes will receive an A- (90 on a 100 point scale) for the class participation component of their grade and a higher A if, in addition, they regularly contribute to class discussion and the if the led agenda making exercise results in productive conversation. Careless preparation of the agenda, of the reader responses, or unexcused absence from more than two classes will mean that the student will likely receive *no more than a C* (75) and, depending on the record, possibly less than a 75, for the class participation component of the grade.

NOTE WELL:

Plan now for the due dates: February 13 (Essay 1); March 27 (Essay 2); April 24 (Essay 3 or Optional Paper)

NOTE: I will always make accommodations for absences due to religious holidays. Please let me know at the outset of the semester if you will need to be absent for religious reasons.

NOTE: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Grading: All assignments and class participation will be graded on a 100-point scale. The final course grade will be the weighted average of these grades on the following plus/minus scale:

94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
60-66	D
0-59	F

NOTE WELL:

Class Recordings: We are planning to meet in person. If circumstances require us to meet via Zoom the class will also be recorded. Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings. The reason for this rule is to protect freedom of expression in the class..

Please purchase these specific texts. They are all relatively inexpensive. It is useful to have the same texts so that we can more easily refer to passages we are discussing.

Texts:

The Federalist Papers, Clinton Rossiter, editor. (Signet Classics)

The Anti-Federalist Papers, Ralph Ketchum, editor. (Signet Classics)

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Kessler trans. (Hackett)

The Essential Douglass, Buccola, editor. (Hackett)

Optional: Jeffrey K. Tulis and Nicole Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*. [This book is available free online through the UT library.]

Schedule:

January 9 Introduction,
 Discussion of *Federalist* #1.

January 16 MLK Day – no class

January 23	Federalist 9-10, 14-16, 23-26 Federal Farmer, (Ketchum pp.256-269) Recommended: Herbert J. Storing, <i>What the Anti-Federalists Were For</i>
January 30	Federalist 37-42, 47-51 Centinel, (Ketchum 227-236) Cato (Ketchum, 317-323)
February 6	Federalist, 52-58, 62-67, 69-73 John Dewitt (Ketchum pp.189-98) Patrick Henry (Ketchum, pp. 199-216) Recommended: Chapter 2, <i>Legacies of Losing in American Politics</i> Essay #1 topics assigned
February 13	Federalist 78-80 Federalist 84 Brutus, (Ketchum pp. 269-309) Melancton Smith (Ketchum 336-356) Essay #1 DUE
February 20	Tocqueville, 1 – 73
February 27	Tocqueville, 73-168
March 6.	Tocqueville, pp. 169-200

MARCH 13 to 18 Spring Break

March 20	Tocqueville, pp. 201-248 Essay # 2 Topics assigned
<i>Students who wish to submit a long paper in lieu of the third essay should discuss their topics with me, and get approval, by this date.</i>	
March 27	Tocqueville, pp. 249 to end.

Essay # 2 DUE

April 3.	Tocqueville, pp. 248-319
----------	--------------------------

April 10 Readings for the last three weeks will be selected from the Buccola, ed. *The Essential Douglass: Selected Writings and Speeches*.

Essential, items 5, 6, 7, 8

Essay #3 Topics assigned

April 17 Douglass,

Essential, items 9, 10, 16

April 24 Douglass,

Essential, Item 32

Essay #3 Due