

# Tocqueville and Today

GOV 312L Issues and Policies in American Government  
Spring 2022

Unique # 37865

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30pm-1:45pm (but see section on class procedure below)

**Professor: Dana Stauffer**

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Office Hours: Wednesdays,  
11:15am-2:15pm (on Zoom for now)

This course examines American democracy – how it got started, how it works, how it has evolved over time, and how it matters to our lives. We will read primary texts from the American colonial period up through the twenty-first century. For much of the course, we will study American democracy through the lens of Alexis de Tocqueville's classic work, *Democracy in America*. Written in the 1830s, the work takes up questions and themes that continue to resonate almost two centuries later. Tocqueville offers wide-ranging observations on American intellectual life, family life, religion, technology, and the arts. In the first third of the course, we will study the American founding, both in its own right and through Tocqueville's eyes. In the middle portion of the course, we will focus on the major points of Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy. In the last third of the course, we will read authors who challenge Tocqueville's key arguments, update his observations, or take his themes in a new direction, and we will consider how well his predictions have been borne out.

This course satisfies the second half of the **legislative requirement in Government**.

## Required Texts:

The main text for this course is ***Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, translated by Arthur Goldhammer and edited by Olivier Zunz** (Library of America Press). This work has two volumes. Tocqueville published Volume I of *Democracy in America* in 1835, and Volume II five years later. We will read large portions of both volumes.

There are **two editions** of this translation: one is paperback and separated into two volumes (2012). The other is a hardcover and includes both Volume I and Volume II

(2004). Either one is perfectly fine to use. Because the hardcover is easier to obtain these days, I will be referring to it and to its page numbers when giving assignments.

There are many other editions of *Democracy in America*. The Mansfield & Winthrop translation, published by the University of Chicago Press, is a good alternative to the Goldhammer translation. The Vintage Classics edition, translated by Phillips Bradley, is a good translation. But if you use those translations, or the online edition, you may have trouble following the assignments which are sometimes necessarily given by page number.

In addition to this text, we will have a variety of other readings that will be in Canvas.

## **Grading and Requirements**

Short Response Paper: 5%

Exam 1: 25%

Exam 2 (In person): 25%

Exam 3: 25%

Class Participation & Attendance: 20%

**I DO use plus and minus grades as follows:** 92.5 and up = A, 89.5 and up = A-, 86.5 and up is a B+, and so on.

### **Short Response Question (5%)**

I will post a brief response question on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Answers will have a word limit of 300 words. You can submit your answer through Canvas. These responses will be graded from 1 to 5. The point of this assignment is to give you a rough sense of how you are doing early on in the course. It will be due February 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Exams (75%)**

There will be three exams in this course, each one worth 25% of the grade. The first and third exams will be take home essay exams submitted in Canvas. The second exam will be an in-class blue book essay exam. For each exam, I will give you at least 2 essay questions to choose from. Answers will be graded for clarity, accuracy, textual evidence, writing quality, and depth and originality of analysis.

Exams 1 and 3 will have a word range of 900-1200 words.

### **Class Participation and Attendance (20%)**

Each week I will post discussion questions in Canvas. Responses will be due Wednesdays at 10pm. (If you post after 10pm, I *might* see it, but I make no guarantees). The primary way to gain full credit for class participation is to post before class 4 times throughout the semester. You are welcome to post more than that. The posts do not have to be novel-length or incredibly profound. However, they should be well-thought, considered responses to the question. You can also raise a question yourself, or respond to somebody else's response. All posts must be civil and respectful, and they must be your own original thoughts. In addition to gaining class participation through online posts, you can gain credit through active, thoughtful participation in class discussion.

## **Attendance**

Once we return to in-person instruction, attendance will be required. Having said that, you can have up to 5 unexcused absences before it begins to affect your grade. If you have more than 5 unexcused absences in the class, your credit for attendance will drop 1 point with each additional absence, up to a maximum of 10 points.

If you are ill or miss class for religious reasons, that is considered an excused absence. Please send an email to your TA to let him/her know.

As the COVID pandemic stretches on, we want to be as careful as we can about transmission. We prefer to err on the side of caution, and excuse absences rather than risk you coming to class with COVID. Just communicate with us, keep us apprised of your situation, and we will be reasonable.

The current plan is for attendance to be worth 10% and class participation to be worth 10%.

However, what is stated above is based on the current plan, which is to be online for two weeks, and then shift to in-person instruction. If we end up online for longer than two weeks—which I do not anticipate, but let's face it, it might happen—then I will either start requiring attendance at the Zoom sessions, or count class participation for part/all of the attendance grade, or some combination of the two.

## **Class Procedure Prior to 2/1/22**

While we need to be online, class will be conducted as follows: I will post asynchronous lectures on Tuesdays. They will be under the "Panopto" tab. On Thursdays, we will have a synchronous Zoom session from 12:45-1:45. It is my aim to return to in-person instruction as soon as is feasible.

## **Technology Policy**

With the exception of designated volunteer note takers, and/or those with a documented disability accommodation, the use of laptops, e-readers, tablets, or computers of any kind is prohibited in class. Cell phones must be silent and out of sight. I reserve the right to confiscate, for the duration of the class, any device that rings, dings, or otherwise makes a disturbance.

### **Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited**

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, and review sheets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

### **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>.

Notification of a need for disability accommodations must be given to the professor at least 14 days prior to a paper due date or exam.

### **Accommodations for religious holidays**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Academic Honesty**

In all of your work for this course, you are expected to know and to adhere to University of Texas policies regarding academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course. Please familiarize yourself with the University honor code.

## Course Schedule

- January 18      Introduction to the course
- January 20      *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Introduction, Chapter 3  
                    Zoom session: 12:45-1:45
- January 25      Vol. 1, Part One, Chapter 2
- January 27      Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 66-78, 89-94  
                    Zoom session: 12:45-1:45
- February 1      The Articles of Confederation, *Brutus I, Centinel I*
- February 3      *Federalist Papers* 1, 2, 9, and 10
- February 8      *Federalist* # 51, more Federalist Papers TBD,  
                    George Washington's Farewell Address (1796); **short response posted**
- February 10     Part One, Chapter 8, pp. 126-135, 151-155, 179-185,  
                    Part Two, Chapter 2; **short response due @2pm**
- February 15     Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 6 and 7
- February 17     Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 8 and 9, pp. 331-352;  
                    exam questions posted
- February 22     **Exam 1 - DUE @ 2pm**
- February 24     Volume Two, Chapters 1, 2, 8, 10, 11
- March 1        Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 1-4
- March 3        Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 5-9

March 8	Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 10-13
March 10	Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 14-17
March 13	Vol. 2. Part Two, Chapters 18-20, Part Three, Chapter 1
March 15	Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapters 8-10
March 22	Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapters 11-12
March 24	Vol. 2, Part Three, Selections/Part Four, Chapters 1-3, 6-8
March 29	<b>Review Session (Optional)</b>
March 31	<b>Exam 2: In Class Essay</b>
April 5	Elizabeth Cady Stanton, <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> and Speech at Seneca Falls, 1848
April 7	No Class (I will be at a conference)
April 12	Frederick Douglass, <i>Fourth of July Oration</i> , and Henry David Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts"
April 14	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 1 & 3
April 19	Mill/Theodore Roosevelt, "Citizenship in a Republic"
April 21	Tom Wolfe, "Two Young Men Who Went West"
April 26	Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone"; "Still Bowling Alone?" and "Our Kids"
April 28	Michael Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , selections
May 3	Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Democratic Disconnect" and Mounk, "The Undemocratic Dilemma";

exam question posted

May 5

**Exam 3 -Due @ 2pm**

**There is no final exam in this course.**