

# Tocqueville and Today

GOV 312L Issues and Policies in American Government  
Spring 2021 - Online

**Unique # 38480**

**Mondays & Wednesdays (Asynchronous)  
& Fridays 11:00AM-12:00PM (Synchronous)**

**Professor Dana Stauffer**

[danastauffer@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:danastauffer@austin.utexas.edu)

This course examines American democracy – how it got started, how it works, what its foundations are, its strengths and weaknesses, its limits and aspirations, 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. Key themes of our examination will be: religion and politics, economics and politics, gender, class, race, democratic leadership, majority tyranny, and the meaning of American equality. We will also take up Tocqueville's wide-ranging observations on American intellectual life, family life, and the arts as they relate to 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

1. *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, Volume I. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer and edited by Olivier Zunz. Library of America. 2012.
2. *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, Volume II. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer and edited by Olivier Zunz. Library of America. 2012.
3. Various online readings. They will have links in Canvas.

**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.

## Grading and Requirements

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Class Participation: 10%

Attendance: 10%

## **How the Class Will Work**

On Mondays and Wednesdays, I will post asynchronous lectures. I tend to break up each day's lectures into two or three chunks. They will be under the Panopto tab in Canvas.

On Fridays, class will be a synchronous zoom session. When you attend our zoom sessions, please begin with your microphone muted and your camera on. Please keep your camera on as much as possible. If you need to step away for a moment, that's fine. But please keep your cameras on, as a general rule.

## **Attendance**

If you miss more than 4 of our synchronous sessions, your credit for attendance will begin to drop 1 point with each additional absence. If you are ill or miss class for religious reasons, your absence will be excused. Please send an email to the TA to let him know. If you are in a zoom session and your internet connection breaks, try to reconnect. If it becomes a significant issue, email the TA and let him know.

## **Class Participation**

Your class participation grade will be based on your engagement with the class in our synchronous Friday classes and on your participation in the class discussions posted on Canvas. I will post discussion questions each week. Most weeks there will be one discussion question; some weeks there will be two or three, depending on the material we cover. You can earn credit by commenting on those questions, responding to other student's posts, or asking questions about the lecture. I expect all comments in Canvas discussions to be thoughtful and civil. You do not have to participate in every discussion, or write novel-length comments. But you should demonstrate engagement with the issues under discussion in the course.

A good rule of thumb for what you can expect to get for your participation grade:

Posts over the course of the semester:

1-5 substantive comments: 6 or 7/10

5-10 substantive comments: 7 or 8/10

10-14 substantive comments: 9 or 10 out of 10

For reference, there are 14 full weeks in the semester, so to get full credit, you should aim to post 1 comment per week *most* weeks. (You can skip four weeks).

**TIMING:** To get full credit for your comment, it must be posted before we discuss the related material in our synchronous session or shortly thereafter. Each discussion post will close about a week after we discuss the associated material in class.

Do not plan to go back and add comments at the end of the semester!! Most posts will be closed by then.

I will read the comments posted each week before Friday's discussion and take them up in our synchronous class. To ensure that I read your comment before class on Friday morning, it must be posted by 8pm Thursday night. I may see it if you post it after that, but it is not guaranteed.

The above point distribution does not take into account the participation that will take place in our live classes. If you are a great participant in those sessions, that will improve your participation grade.

## **Exams**

Exams will be essay-style questions. Exams will post on Fridays at 12:15pm, after our synchronous session ends. They will be due the following Monday at 5pm. (There will be no new lecture on those Mondays). The first midterm exam will be due March 1<sup>st</sup>; the second will be due April 12<sup>th</sup>. I will give you at least 2 questions to choose from for each exam. Answers will be graded for clarity, accuracy, textual evidence, writing quality, and depth and originality of analysis. Before the first exam, I will post a RUBRIC laying out more precisely the standards by which essays will be evaluated.

Exams 1 and 2 will have a word range of 750-1000 words. The final exam will have a word range of 1000-1500 words.

## **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.

**Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:** No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, 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.

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. Guidance on public access to class recordings can be found [here](#).

## **Course Schedule\* \*\***

\*Dates in **bold** indicate a synchronous Friday class

\*\* The schedule below is the plan. I will frequently post Canvas announcements confirming the exact assignments for upcoming classes (because sometimes we fall behind) and giving reminders, etc. Please set your notifications in Canvas to get these announcements. That is my main method of communication.

Jan. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Intro: Who was Tocqueville and What is this Course All About?
<b>Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Introduction to <i>Democracy in America</i> , Vol. 1
Jan. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Equality: Vol. 1, Part One, Chapter 3

Jan. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Colonial Origins: Vol. 1, Part One, Chapter 2
<b>Jan. 29<sup>th</sup></b>	Popular Sovereignty and the Towns: Vol. 1, Part One, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 66-78, 89-94
Feb. 1 <sup>st</sup>	The Founding: Anti-Federalist <i>Brutus I</i> , <i>Centinel I</i>
Feb. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Federalist # 10</i> and <i># 51</i>
<b>Feb. 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Tocqueville on the Founding: Vol. 1, Part One, Chapter 8, pp. 126-135, 151-155, 179-185
Feb. 8 <sup>th</sup>	George Washington's Farewell Address (1796) ; Tocqueville on Political Parties: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 2
Feb. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Advantages of Democracy: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 6
<b>Feb. 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Disadvantages of Democracy: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 7
Feb. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Ways of Mitigating the Disadvantages: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 8
Feb. 17 <sup>th</sup>	What Sustains the Republic: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 9
<b>Feb. 19<sup>th</sup></b>	The Three Races: Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 10, Selections
Feb. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Intellectual Tendencies: <u>Vol. 2</u> , Part One, Chapters 1, 2, and 8
Feb. 24 <sup>th</sup>	The Arts: Vol. 2, Part One, Chapters 10-11
<b>Feb. 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Review, Catch Up & Discussion; <b>EXAM ONE POSTED</b>
Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>EXAM ONE DUE at 5pm</b>
Mar. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Individualism: Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 1-4
<b>Mar. 5<sup>th</sup></b>	What Mitigates Individualism: Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 5-8
Mar. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Self Interest Rightly Understood: Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 9-12
Mar. 10 <sup>th</sup>	American Materialism: Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 13-15
<b>Mar. 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Distant Objects: Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapters 16-17
Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	American Economic Life: Vol. 2. Part Two, Chapters 18-20
Mar. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Democratic Morality: Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapters 1 and 8
<b>Mar. 26<sup>th</sup></b>	American Women: Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapters 9-10
Mar. 29 <sup>th</sup>	American Women: Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapters 11- 12

Mar. 31 <sup>st</sup>	Ambition and Revolution: Vol. 2, Part Three, Chapter 19 & 21
Apr. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Vol. 2, Part Three, Selections, Part Four, Chapters 1-3, 6
Apr. 5 <sup>th</sup>	Democratic Despotism: Vol. 2, Part Four, Chapters 7-8
Apr. 7 <sup>th</sup>	Elizabeth Cady Stanton, <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> and Speech at Seneca Falls, 1848
Apr. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Review & Discussion; <b>EXAM TWO POSTED</b>
Apr. 12 <sup>th</sup>	<b>EXAM TWO DUE at 5pm</b>
Apr. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Melville, <i>Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs</i>
Apr. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Frederick Douglass, <i>Fourth of July Oration</i> , and Henry David Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts"
Apr. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Evolution of Freedom: John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 1
Apr. 21st	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 2
Apr. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 3
Apr. 26 <sup>th</sup>	Theodore Roosevelt, "Citizenship in a Republic"
Apr. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Perfectibility: Tom Wolfe, "Two Young Men Who Went West"
Apr. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Class: Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone;" and "Still Bowling Alone? The Post 9/11 Split"
May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Materialism: Michael Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , selections
May 5 <sup>th</sup>	Stability: Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect" and updates
May 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Review; FINAL EXAM POSTED</b>

**Final Exam: Due Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at 2pm**