

**Constitutional Principles: Core Texts**  
**GOV 312P (Unique #38510)**  
**Spring 2021**  
**WAG 420, MWF 2:00 – 3:00 PM**  
**Final Paper: Monday, May 17**

**Dr. Erik Dempsey**

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**Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12 and Friday 3-4 on Zoom; Thursday 3-4 at the tables outside Gregory Gym**

**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 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 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, and Albert Murray. 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

The course requirements have been adjusted in light of the pandemic and the burden it places on students. Students can choose one of the two following options completing the course requirements:

### **Option #1: Without optional paper**

**First Paper: 40% of final grade**

**Final Paper: 50%**

**Short Writing: 10%**

### **Option #2: With optional paper**

**First Paper: 25%**

**Second Paper: 25%**

**Final Paper: 40%**

**Short Writing: 10%**

If you complete the optional paper, I will calculate your grade both ways, and you will receive the higher of the two scores as your final mark.

**Papers.** There will be three papers assigned in this class, the second of which is optional. The first two will have a length requirement of 1000-1200 words; the last paper will have a length requirement of about 1250-1500 words. Papers will be graded both on substance and on the quality of the writing. The shorter papers are due **March 6** and **April 9 (this is the optional paper)**, and the **final paper is due on May 17**. I will distribute each paper topic on Canvas at least 13 days before the paper is due.

You may rewrite your first two papers. If you rewrite, your grade can increase by as much as one full grade (so, you can go from a B- to an A-, for instance).

**Short writing assignments.** There will be two short writing assignments. There is a short paper due on February 12. You will also write a review of another student's paper when you turn in your paper on March 6; the review will be due Monday, March 9. Each of these assignments will count for half of this part of your grade.

**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 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.

Due to the pandemic, absences will be excused easily. If you are feeling even slightly sick, I urge you to stay home. You are required to email me (use the subject heading "Absence") to let me know that you are missing class, but I will excuse any health-related absence, and will not require a doctor's note.

**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.

## **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 own all the books for this class. Please note that electronic editions will not be allowed. You should have a paper copy of each book.

1. Course Packet, available from Document Solutions in GSB
2. John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*. Croft Classics. ISBN 0882951254.
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 DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Classics. ISBN 0486280411.

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

*These readings may be subject to change. I will announce changes during class and post them on Canvas.*

*Assignments listed as "CP" can be found in the course packet.*

Wednesday, January 20: Excerpts from Aristotle and the Declaration (CP)

Friday, January 22: John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1-4

Monday, January 25: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 5

Wednesday, January 27: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 6: Sections 52-58 only; Chapter 7: All (Sections 77-94); Chapter 8: Sections 95-100 and 119-122  
Friday, January 29: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Continued

Monday, February 1: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 9-14  
Wednesday, February 3: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 19  
Friday, February 5: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 23-35 (end before “In the last place...”)

Monday, February 8: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 35-46 (end before “The *Articles* of Religion are...”)  
Wednesday, February 10: Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 46-56 (end at “Farewell”)  
Friday, February 12: Federalist 1-2, 39

### **Short paper due at 11:59 PM on February 12**

Monday, February 15: Federalist 6, 8-9, 11  
Wednesday, February 17: Federalist 10, and excerpt from Washington’s Farewell Address (CP)  
Friday, February 19: Federalist 37, 48, 49, 51

Monday, February 22: Federalist 52, 53, 55  
Wednesday, February 24: Anti-Federalist reading (CP)  
Friday, February 26: Federalist 84; Bill of Rights readings (CP)

Monday, March 1: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume I, Introduction  
Wednesday, March 3: Tocqueville, I.1.2 (=Volume I, Part 1, Chapter 2)  
Friday, March 5: Tocqueville, I.1.3

### **First paper due at 11:59 PM on March 5**

Monday, March 8: Tocqueville, I.2.1, I.2.7  
Wednesday, March 10: Tocqueville, I.2.9  
Friday, March 12: Tocqueville, Volume II “Notice” (pp. 399-400), II.2.1-3

### **SPRING BREAK**

Monday, March 22: Tocqueville, II.2.4-7  
Wednesday, March 24: Tocqueville, II.2.8-9  
Friday, March 26: Tocqueville, II.2.10-17

Monday, March 29: Tocqueville, II.2.18-20  
Wednesday, March 31: Tocqueville, II.4.6-8  
Friday, April 2: Tocqueville, continued

Monday, April 5: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (19-128)  
Wednesday, April 7: Douglass, Early Selections from Douglass (CP)  
Friday, April 9: Douglass, Fourth of July Speech (CP)

### **Optional paper due at 11:59 PM on April 9**

Monday, April 12: Booker T Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 1-11, 57-64, 79-81, 105-115, 156-157 (last three paragraphs only), plus selections in CP

Wednesday, April 14: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Forethought, Chapters 1 and 3; and “The Talented Tenth” (CP)

Friday, April 16: Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races” (CP), *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 6

Monday, April 19: Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 14

Wednesday, April 21: Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech (CP)

Friday, April 23: James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village” (to be posted on canvas as a pdf)

Monday, April 26: Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans* (to be posted on canvas as a pdf)

Wednesday, April 28: Lincoln, Lyceum Address (CP)

Friday, April 30: Lincoln, “House Divided” and Seventh Lincoln-Douglas Debate (CP)

Monday, May 3: Lincoln, Gettysburg Address and Fragment on the Constitution, Second Inaugural Address (CP)

Wednesday, May 5: Frederick Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln” (CP)

Friday, May 7: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart” (CP)

**Final paper due at 11:59 PM on Monday, May 17**

## **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.