

**Constitutional Principles: Core Texts**  
**The University of Texas at Austin**  
**GOV 312P/CIV 312P**  
**Fall 2024**

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*Howard Chandler Christy's Scene at the Signing of  
the Constitution of the United States, 1940*

Monday/Wednesday/Friday  
Classroom: PAR

Office: Littlefield Carriage Home  
Office Hours: M/W/F  
10am-12pm; or by appointment

## Course Description

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This course will examine the theoretical ideas that informed the creation and development of America's political system and some of the major contemporary challenges to the maintenance of American democracy. Topics of discussion include the political thought of the American Founders, the role of slavery and race in constitutional development, the political philosophical influence of John Locke on the American founding, and the political reflections of Alexis de Tocqueville on the nature and challenges of American democracy. Emphasis will be placed on the discussion of important texts and primary documents.

## Texts

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All texts required for this course are available at the University Coop and on Amazon. The rest of the readings will be made available on Canvas. Please always bring the text we are discussing to class in print form (not an electronic copy).

1. The Federalist Papers, Hamilton, Madison, Jay (Charles R. Kesler, ed. Rossiter)  
<https://www.amazon.com/Federalist-Papers-Signet-Classics/dp/0451528816>
2. Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings  
<https://www.amazon.com/Lincoln-Speeches-Writings-Roy-Basler/dp/0306810751>
3. Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville  
<https://about.libertyfund.org/books/democracy-in-america/>

## Learning Outcomes

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The most important learning goal is to develop skills in interpreting texts of political philosophy through close readings and focused discussion. Other goals include fostering an engaging discussion environment and cultivating your ability to communicate clearly and well, both orally and in your written work. Your progress will be assessed by your performance on three in-person exams throughout the semester and by the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussions.

## Assignments

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- 20% Essay I
- 20% Essay II
- 20% Essay III
- 20% Participation & Attendance
- 20% Reading Quizzes

### **Essay Writing Rubric:**

1. Try to have a good first paragraph. After reading your introduction, I should be able to easily identify your thesis and see that you will provide thoughtful analysis.
2. Each paragraph should be organized around one idea and should be an explanation of that idea. Having the first sentence of each paragraph be a sort of thesis statement is one way to do this.
3. Have lots of quotes and parenthetical references!
4. Show mastery of the reading material (regurgitating my arguments or the arguments in the readings is not enough)
5. In your conclusion, articulate some difficulties in the theories of the authors you have read and raise some bigger questions. **DON'T SUMMARIZE YOUR ARGUMENT.**

**Participation & Attendance:** Class participation is determined by your attendance and contributions to class discussions. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in detail. The syllabus provides questions to guide your preparation of the readings. I encourage you to keep a separate journal for reading notes. In addition to answering the reading questions on the syllabus, you should note any questions, thoughts, perplexities, and interpretations of the text that arise for you while reading, and you should be prepared to raise them during class. Attending office hours also contributes to your participation grade. I am looking for evidence of active and serious intellectual engagement with the course material.

Attendance is mandatory and role will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are allowed two unexcused absences. After two unexcused absences, *three points* will be subtracted from your final participation grade for *each* class missed. This means that three or more unexcused absences will affect your overall grade negatively.

### **Policy on Technology and Artificial Intelligence**

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Please turn off your phones, tablets, laptops, and recording devices and do not take them out at any time before or during class. If you have a special need for one of these items, you should explain that need to me. If you use a cell phone, laptop, tablet, or recording device in the classroom without prior approval from the professor, you will receive zero points for the “Participation & Attendance” portion of your grade that day.

**You are not permitted to use, consult, or employ Chat GPT or any other AI program on any assignment for this class. I will use AI detection software when reading your exams. If you are caught using Chat GPT or any other AI software, you will fail this class. The same consequence applies if you are caught plagiarizing.**

You are required to have a physical copy of every book and reading assignment. E-readers are not allowed in class. If a reading is posted on Canvas, you must print it out in advance and bring it to class.

## **Grading Policy**

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Plus/minus grades will be used on all assignments and final grades in this course. All work will also be given a numerical grade on the following scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

### **Grade Descriptions:**

A Truly Exceptional: All work meets or exceeds the highest expectations for the course

A- Outstanding: Superior work in all areas of the course

B+ Very Good: Superior work in most areas of the course

B Good: Solid work across the board

B- More than Acceptable: More than acceptable, but falls short of solid work

C+ Acceptable: Meets all the basic requirements and standards for the course

C Acceptable: Meets most of the basic requirements and standards in several areas

D Minimally Passing Work: just over the threshold of acceptability

F Failing: Unacceptable performance

**Late work:** Work that is submitted after the assignment deadline will receive a letter grade reduction. Additional letter grade reductions are made for each subsequent day the assignment is late. This includes the day it is turned in and weekend days. For example, if an assignment is due Wednesday and you turn it in on Thursday, your grade will be reduced by 2 letter grades or 20 points, or if a paper is due Thursday and you turn it in on Monday, your grade will be reduced by 5 letter grades or 50 points. You must turn work in on Canvas or to me directly, unless we agree to some other arrangement.

Make back-up copies of your work. Do not wait until the last minute to print your readings or assignments since students often find that in waiting to the last minute to print their paper, they meet with problems and delays. Such last-minute problems are not acceptable excuses for handing work in late. If you miss handing in an assignment, you must have a very good and a documented excuse: for example, a doctor's or infirmar's note, or evidence validating a family emergency. Such evidence will also be required if you miss the final exam.

## **Course Flags**

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**Ethics:** This course carries the 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.

**Cultural Diversity in the US:** This course also carries the 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 and Martin Luther King JR. We will see how they wrestled with the question of what American principles mean to people who have suffered under institutionalized slavery and segregation.

### **Students with Disabilities**

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If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://disability.utexas.edu/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

### **Other University Resources**

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The University Resources for Students Canvas Website is available here: <https://utexas.instructure.com/enroll/TP964H>. You can there find information about UT's Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), University Health Services (UHS), The Sanger Learning Center, etc.

### **Academic Integrity**

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**Honor Code:** *"As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the university and uphold academic integrity."*

**Academic honesty is expected and honorable.** We are all bound by the university's policies regarding academic integrity. To learn more about academic integrity standards, advice for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>. If you have any doubts or questions regarding your work as you complete assignments, please check with me.

Again, consulting Chat GPT or other forms of artificial intelligence on your assignments is a form of academic dishonesty and will be penalized accordingly. I use AI-detection software to check the integrity of all submitted assignments. If any individual is caught using Chat GPT on any assignment for our class, they will fail the class.

### **Email & Office Hours**

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You are encouraged to correspond with me via email if an issue arises outside of normal class hours. Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email. To the extent possible, all substantive questions should be brought to class or to office hours rather than emailed.

**Office Hours:** Until renovations of Littlefield Home are completed, all office hours will need to be by appointment at a location on campus to be determined. Please coordinate with me regarding office hours by email.

## **Course Reading Schedule**

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Sources marked with an asterisk (\*) are available on Canvas, as noted. Please always bring the text we are discussing to class in print form (not an electronic copy).

### **MODULE SCHEDULE**

#### **Module 0: America's Political Philosophy**

##### **Aug. 26: What are Rights?**

1. The Declaration of Independence
2. U.S. Constitution

##### **Aug. 28: What are Rights? Reexamined**

1. The Declaration of Independence
2. U.S. Constitution

##### **Aug. 30: Where Do Rights Come From?**

1. John Locke, Second Treatise, Chapter II, "Of The State of Nature"\*
  - a. Reading will be provided in class.

##### **Sept. 4: Freedom from War and Slavery**

1. Locke, Chapter III, "Of The State Of War"\*
2. Locke, Chapter IV, "Of Slavery"\*

##### **Sept. 6: What is the Right of Property? (NO In-Person Class)**

1. Locke, Chapter V, "Of Property"\*

This is a longer reading, so it will be assigned for this class and next class

##### **Sept. 9: What is the Right of Property?**

1. Locke, Chapter V, "Of Property"\*

##### **Sept. 11: What is Freedom?**

1. Madison, "Of Property"\*
  - a. <https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s23.html>
2. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*
  - a. Excerpts will be provided.

## **Module I: The Constitutional Founding**

“It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”  
-Alexander Hamilton

### **Sept. 13: The Great Debate**

1. *The Federalist Papers* #1 & 9
2. *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, Brutus 1

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-i/>

### **Sept. 16: The Problem of Faction**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, #10

### **Sept. 18: The New Federalism**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, #14 & 15
2. *The Anti-Federalists*, Brutus II (YOU CAN SKIM/SKIP THE SECOND HALF OF THE ESSAY)

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-ii/>

### **Sept. 20: The New Republicanism**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, # 37 & 39

### **Sept. 23: The Will of the People**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, # 49

### **Sept. 25: The Separation of Powers**

1. *The Federalist Papers* # 47 (stop at the bottom of p. 300)
2. *The Federalists Papers* # 51

### **Sept. 27: Madison’s System Reexamined**

1. Centinel I

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_pIN7NwuL\\_cAb32qGri-csv\\_xNkKKEJl6C-78vfVGco/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_pIN7NwuL_cAb32qGri-csv_xNkKKEJl6C-78vfVGco/edit?usp=sharing)

### **Sept. 30: The Problem of Representation**

1. *The Anti-Federalists*, Brutus III

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-iii/>

### **Oct. 2: Resolving the Problem of Representation**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, #55, 57, 64 (only the first 2-3 pages), 65

### **Oct. 4: Taming the Executive and Judiciary**

1. Cato IV: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/cato-iv/>
2. *The Federalist Papers*, # 70-72



**Oct. 7: Taming the Judiciary**

1. *The Federalist Papers*, # 78
2. *The Anti-Federalists*, Brutus XI

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-ix/>

**Oct. 9: The Promise and Perils of American Democracy**

1. Washington's Farewell Address

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/farewell-address/>

**Oct. 11: Office Hours for Essay (No in-person class)**

Essay Prompt will be emailed to you.

**Module II: Slavery and Constitutional Crisis**

"The real question, the all-commanding question, is whether American justice, American liberty, American civilization, American law, and American Christianity can be made to include and protect, alike and forever, all American citizens...It is whether this great nation shall conquer its prejudices, rise to the dignity of its professions, and proceed in the sublime course of truth and liberty marked out for itself..." -Frederick Douglass

**Oct. 14: The Inhumanity of Slavery**

1. Watch this video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OobaE\\_CtUo8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OobaE_CtUo8)

2. Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>

3. Harriet Jacobs, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" (1861)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpIp-z8DYQhFU5SuMuiKnxTzMl5Ult-HRqGUsho1qhI/edit?usp=sharing>

**Oct. 16: Slavery and the Constitution**

1. William Lloyd Garrison, "On the Constitution and the Union"

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/on-the-constitution-and-the-union/>

2. Frederick Douglass, "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?"

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-constitution-of-the-united-states-is-it-pro-slavery-or-anti-slavery/>

**Oct. 18: Debating Slavery**

1. Lincoln, "Fragments: On Slavery," pages 278-9.
2. Lincoln, Peoria Speech on the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, pages 283-323

**Oct. 21: Lincoln on Slavery**

1. Letter to George Robertson: pages, 330-331



2. Dread Scott Speech Excerpt: page 360-362 (start from the first full paragraph “Chief Justice Taney”)
3. Fragment on Slavery: pages 477-478
4. Letter to H.L. Pierce: pages, 488-489
5. Fragment on the Constitution and the Union: page 513

### **Oct. 23: Contrasting Americas**

1. Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address: pages, 579-588
2. Alexander Stephens, “Corner Stone” Speech,  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/corner-stone-speech-excerpt/>

### **Oct. 25: Lincoln’s Final Words**

1. Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Horace Greely, pages bottom of 651- 652
2. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, page 734
3. Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address: pages, 792-793

### **October 28: Debating the Legacy of Slavery and Lincoln**

1. Frederick Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln”  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/oration-in-memory-of-abraham-lincoln/>

### **Oct. 30: Debating the Legacy of Slavery**

1. James Baldwin Discusses Racism in America (on Canvas as well)  
Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWwOi17WHpE>
2. Nikole Hannah-Jones, “The Idea of America” **(STOP READING AFTER PAGE 20)**  
[https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/the\\_idea\\_of\\_america\\_full\\_essay.pdf](https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/the_idea_of_america_full_essay.pdf)
3. Lucas Morel “America Wasn’t Founded on White Supremacy”  
<https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/america-wasnt-founded-on-white-supremacy>

### **Nov. 1: Office Hours for Essay (No in-person class)**

## **Module III: The Promise and Perils of American Democracy**

### **Nov. 4: The American Founding**

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Excerpts of Chapters I & II, pages 40-44; 45-70

### **Nov. 6: Township, Universal Suffrage, and Local Politics**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 98-102; 314-318; 396-401

### **Nov. 8: Tyranny of the Majority**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 410-420

**Nov. 11: Separation of Church and State**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 479-488

**Nov. 13: Intellectual Enslavement**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 690-736

**Nov. 15: Religion as a Dogmatic Foundation**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 742-758

**Nov. 18: Love of Equality and Individualism**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 872-884

**Nov. 20: Love of Material Well-Being and Restlessness**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 930-947

**Nov. 22: New Despotism**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1245-1261

**Dec. 2: Remedies (Old Books, Civic Participation)**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 395-401; 815-817; 887-894

**Dec. 4: Remedies (Self-Interested Well Understood)**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 918-929

**Dec. 6: Remedies (Religion)**

1. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 954-962
2. Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*\*

**Dec. 9: No Reading**

**Essay Prompt on Canvas**