

Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*
Political Science 931
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2010

Instructor: R. Avramenko
Office: 201C North Hall
Office Hours: T 1:00pm – 3:30pm & by appointment

Course: PS 931
Location: Ingraham 216
Time: T 4:00pm – 6:30pm

Objective:

This course will offer students an opportunity to consider carefully Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Our analysis will consider, among other things: the relationship—historical and logical—between aristocracy and democracy; the instability of democracy; the institutional mechanisms that serve as antidotes to these instabilities; the significance of habit in Tocqueville's thought; the case for American Exceptionalism; the importance of religion for democracy; whether Tocqueville himself recognized the limits of his “institutional” political science; and finally, whether the problem of democracy is, in the final analysis, a psychological problem. The intention is less to defend what Tocqueville says than to begin to comprehend the way in which he thought through democracy and its problems.

Required Texts:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, J.P. Mayer ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 2006).
James, Henry, *The American* (WW Norton & Co., 1978).

One of the following:

Brogin, Hugh, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life*

Jardin, Andre, *Tocqueville: A Biography*

Wolin, Sheldon, *Tocqueville between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life*

Students are **required** to purchase these particular translations and editions. This is a text-based course and full participation requires that we navigate and explore the text together—that we be on the same page, so to speak.

Recommended Book Review Readings:

Boesche, Roger, *The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Cornell U. Press, 1987).

Goldstein, Doris, *Trial of Faith: Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought* (Elsevier, 1975).

Hartz, Louis, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Harvest Books, 1991).

Janara, Laura, *Democracy Growing Up: Authority, Autonomy, and Passion in Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (State University of New York Press, 2002).

Lawler, Peter Augustine, *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty* (Roman & Littlefield, 1993).

Lively, Jack, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Clarendon Press, 1962).

Manent, Pierre, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1996).

Mitchell, Joshua, *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future* (Chicago, 1999).
 Pitts, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2006).
 Putnam, Robert, *Bowling Alone* (Simon and Schuster, 2001).
 Schleifer, James, *The Making of Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (Liberty Fund, 2000).
 Zetterbaum, Marvin, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Stanford University Press, 1967).

Course Grading:

Participation:	10%
Book Reviews (3):	30%
Syllabi (Graduate students only; April 20 & 27)	10%
Research Paper (May 19):	50% (60% for undergraduates)

Participation:

The course will proceed as a seminar. This means its effectiveness depends on two things: reading and participation. The grading schema is therefore designed to encourage both. The participation is based on attendance, preparedness, and participation in discussion. Carefully reading the assigned material—which has been kept to a very reasonable level—before each class will go far to ensuring a full participation grade.

Book Reviews:

Through the semester, each student will read (at least) three scholarly books on the thought of Tocqueville and provide the class with a review of each. The objective of these reviews is to be informative and critical. The 3-page (max) review will inform the class of: a) the general argument the author makes, b) where the book fits in Tocqueville scholarship and/or political theory as a discipline, and c) the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Students will disseminate this review to the class, via e-mail, by **9:00pm on the Sunday preceding class**.

Syllabi:

Near the end of the semester, graduate students will create two syllabi. These syllabi will demonstrate how you would teach a course on Tocqueville and/or Tocquevillean themes. One syllabus shall be for a graduate level class, the other for undergraduate. The syllabi should be **polished and complete**, and ready for inclusion in your teaching portfolio. They will be graded pass/fail by vote of the class. Failures will be given a week for revision and a re-vote will be called. Students will disseminate syllabi to the class, via e-mail, by **9:00pm on the Sunday preceding the day of presentation**.

Research Paper:

A final paper (20-25 pp) is due May 19th. The topic is open. Topics will emerge during the semester as students discover issues and themes of particular interest in the thought of Alexis de Tocqueville. All topics should be discussed with me well in advance of the end of the semester. Topics, outlines, and/or thesis statement will be presented to the class near the end of the term. Students will disseminate this document to the class, via e-mail, by **9:00pm on the Sunday preceding the day of presentation**. Late papers will be penalized a half-letter grade per day.

Course Schedule:

Volume I:

- January 19: Introduction
January 26: Brogan, Jardin, or Wolin; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Author's Preface to the 12th Edition, Author's Introduction
February 2: Vol. I, Part I. Chs. 1-3
February 9: Vol. I, Part I. Chs. 4, 5 (pp. 61-70, 87-98), 6, 8 (pp. 155-170)
February 16: Vol. I, Part II, Chs. 4, 5 (pp. 208-12, 220-30), 6-8
February 23: Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 9
March 2: Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 10 (pp. 316-63)
March 9: Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 10 (pp. 363-407), Conclusion
March: 16: Henry James, *The American*

Volume II:

- March 23: Vol. II, Preface, Part I, Chs. 1-8, 12-17, 20
March 30: Spring Break
April 6: Vol. II, Part II
April 13: Vol. II, Part III, Chs. 1-4, 8-14
April 20: Vol. II, Part III, Chs. 15-26; **presentation of syllabi & paper topics (disseminate via email by 9:00pm Sunday)**
April 27: Vol. II, Part IV, Chs. 1-4, 6-8; **presentation of syllabi & paper topics (disseminate via email by 9:00pm Sunday)**
May 4: "Discourse on the Art and Science of Politics"

Final:
May 19: **Research papers due**

Honor Code:

This course, as all courses, demands adherence to a certain code of honor. If you plagiarize or cheat, you will receive an F for the course and be blacklisted.