

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
Department of Government  
**Spring 2011 - GOV 382M - Seminar on Tocqueville**

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office hours: Tuesday 3:30 - 5PM & Wednesday 1:30 – 3PM.

This graduate seminar is devoted to close a reading of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. We will also read some of the best recent secondary work on Tocqueville, including a number of articles and essays as well as two books, by Pierre Manent and Sheldon Wolin. Last year marked publication of the first English translation of the French critical edition of *Democracy in America* -- a bilingual text in four volumes, edited by Eduardo Nolla. This is a massive and remarkable achievement and will be the main focus of the seminar. We will also take a look at a very recently published volume of letters about America that Tocqueville wrote subsequent to *Democracy*.

Since mid-century, it seems that every decade has been marked by a flurry of interest in one or two political philosophers. The sixties witnessed considerable interest in Marx and Hegel; the seventies produced numerous studies of Rousseau; the early eighties were a fruitful time for new studies of Locke; the late eighties and early nineties a lot of attention was devoted to Foucault; more recently, studies of Tocqueville have flourished. Tocqueville seems to speak to contemporary concerns. Emulating democracies, designing democracies, and sustaining democracies are all efforts of practical significance now. One of the reasons Tocqueville may be important today is that his work represents a model of political inquiry attentive to the relation of theory to practice. His work has appeal for students of comparative politics, of political culture, of the diffusion of ideas in politics, as well as to students of democratic theory and political philosophy more generally.

I would thus like to tailor the seminar to the various interests students bring to it.

**Requirements:**

The most important requirement is preparation for each seminar and participation in our conversation. In addition to regular preparation and participation by all seminar participants (enrolled and auditors), every enrolled student will prepare two short (1,000 word) statements to introduce, elaborate, and interpret portions of the reading of interest. Thus, each week, the conversation will be led by me and by two students who read their short papers and lead part of the discussion. I need to receive hard copies of these papers by 3pm the day of the seminar.

Among the texts we will discuss is a new collection of Tocqueville's correspondence on America. Many of these letters may be of interest to biographers but hold little value for political theorists. We will divide up this text, read portions over the month of February, and report back to the seminar on which items merit close reading by all of us during sessions later in the semester.

In addition to the two short papers/interventions, students have a choice of a) a take-home essay exam at the end of the course, for which students will write two 1500 word analytic essays drawn from a list of several themes that I will distribute **OR** b) a 15-25 page analytic-research paper on some aspect(s) of Tocqueville's thought on a topic chosen by you. Due date will be Monday, May 9.

**Schedule:**

Week 1 January 18

*Democracy in America*

Author's Foreword to Twelfth Edition (appendix 6) in Vol. 4 of Lolla ed.

Author's Introduction

Vol. 1, Part 1 chaps.1-3.

Mansfield, Short Introduction, pp. 1-24.

recommended: Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy*

Week 2 January 25

*Democracy*

Part 1, chaps 4-8,

Welch, "Tocqueville in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," in Welch.

Mansfield and Winthrop, in Welch, Cambridge Companion, pp.81-107.

Nolla edition: translators note, and editors Foreword.

Schleifer, "Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* Reconsidered" in Welch.

Week 3 February 1

*Democracy*

Part II, chaps 1 -6

Manent, "Tocqueville, Political Philosopher" in Welch

Villa, "Tocqueville and Civil Society" in Welch.

Mansfield, Short introduction, pp. 24-36

Week 4 February 8

*Democracy*

vol 1, part 2, chaps 6-9

Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, Preface, Intro, chaps 1-3.

Mansfield, short introduction 37-56.

Vol 1, part 2, chap. 10.

Lerner, "The Complexion of Tocqueville's American," from Ralph Lerner, *The Thinking Revolutionary* (Cornell University Press, 1987).

[in packet]

Week 5 February 15

*Democracy*

Vol 2, Part 1, preface, chaps 1-8

Mitchell, "Tocqueville on Democratic Religious Experience" in Welch

recommended:

Michael Locke McLendon, "Tocqueville, Jansenism and the Psychology of Freedom" *AJPS* (July 2006) and possibly, rebuttal by Mary Love to be posted or circulated if there is interest.

Week 6 February 22

*Democracy*

Vol 2, part 1, chaps 9-21

Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, chaps. 3-6

Week 7 March 1

*Democracy*

Vol 2, part 2, chaps. 1-9

Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, 7-9

Week 8 March 8

*Democracy*

Vol 2, part 2, chaps 10-20.

### **March 14-19 Spring Break**

Week 9 March 22

*Democracy*

Vol 2, part 3, chaps. 1-12

Winthrop, "Tocqueville's American Woman" *Political Theory*, May 1986 (in packet)

Week 10 March 29

*Democracy*

Vol 2, part 3, chaps. 13-26.

recommended: Steven Pittz, "Tocqueville on Equality and Centralization," forthcoming, *Journal of Politics*, to be posted or circulated if there is interest.

Week 11 April 5

Vol 2, part 4, chaps. 1-8.

Mansfield, short introduction, pp. 57-83.

Week 12 April 12

Discussion of Appendices, including one in packet

Tocqueville, Letters (selected)

Guellec, "The Writer Engage: Tocqueville and Political Rhetoric" in Welch.

Week 13 April 19

Tocqueville, Letters (selected)

Nunz, "Tocqueville and the Americans" in Welch.

Week 14 April 26

Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds*, pp. 1- 167

Week 15 May 3

Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds* pp. 168-382.

recommended: Steven Bilakovics, *Democracy Without Politics*, (forthcoming, Harvard University Press.) chapters to be posted or circulated if there is interest.