

**POLS 150 - Democracy in America**  
**Fall 2017**

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**Classroom:** DuSable 461

**Class Meeting Time:** T/R 9:30-10:45

**Office:** DuSable 476

**Office Hours:** T/R 11-12:30 or by appointment

**Course Description**

How did we get here? How is it that in America, in the 21st century, our political landscape is dominated by two political parties? To what can we attribute the deep divisions in America? On the flip side of this, what is the origin of the profound belief in the value of the individual, the idea that every person has the right to pursue their own happiness, and that the government exists for the benefit of the governed? How do we balance the requirements of national security with individual liberty? What does it mean to be free in a democratic republic? What does it mean to be an American? The only way to answer some of these questions is to look back to those who wrestled with similar issues and examine the historical development of American Political Thought and see where it is that we have come from. Therefore, this course is an attempt to wrestle with some of those questions by introducing students to the history of American Political Thought. By turning back to see where we have come from, we will engage with thinkers who have molded the way that we think in the 21st century, but, perhaps more importantly, continue to mold the way in which we think and act. The purpose of this engagement is to develop an understanding of American government, not just as a set of institutions, but as an idea - an experiment in self-governance - that has been challenged continuously since its inception and throughout American history to the present day. By turning to look at where we have come from, we are able to provide an account of where we are, and, hopefully, be able to look forward to where our democratic republic is headed in the future.

**PLUS Pathway: Origins and Influences**

Democracy in America (POLS 150) is one of the courses available for fulfilling your general education Origins and Influences Pathway. It is identified as one of the courses under the Creativity and Critical Analysis knowledge domain. Of these two knowledge domains, this course focuses on critical analysis. We explore primary readings in political philosophy to trace the origins of important concepts regarding politics in American Political thought, including notions of liberty, equality, and good governance. In making our way through intricate arguments made by key figures in this tradition, we develop analytic and critical skills as well as an historical sensibility about the contexts in which key ideas developed.

In an effort to contribute to students' general education, this course joins others in the Origins and Influences Pathway in posing some of the same questions, and exploring various possible answers across academic disciplines. We will focus on the following two Pathway questions:

- 1- How have societies balanced group and individual needs over time?
- 2- How have humans perceived nature, culture, and society over time?

### Course Texts and Readings

The readings below are required and are available from the campus bookstore:

*The People Shall Judge* Vol. 1, Part 1, ed. Staff of the College of the University of Chicago (University of Chicago Press, 1976) ISBN: 9780226770499

*Alexis de Tocqueville - Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2002) ISBN: 0226805360

Course Packet

### Course Expectations

#### - Regular Attendance and Participation

The best way to learn from these texts is through close examination and discussion. Therefore, attendance is required.

Students are expected to participate in the discussion generated in class. Attendance of the class, while essential, is not the same as participating in the class. Students should come to class with questions over the course material - either questions to clarify difficulties in the readings or to argue with the text itself.

There are no built in excused absences for this course. If there are emergency circumstances for why you must miss class, please inform me ahead of time if possible. If you need to leave class early inform me prior to the beginning of class. Any extended absences as a result of illness, death in the family, etc. need to be arranged with me and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Please note:** *The use of electronic devices is prohibited during class time including the use of laptops, tablets, etc. for the use of note taking. All students will be expected to bring their reading materials to class in **hard copy**. The only exceptions to this rule will be made for students with learning disabilities. Please silence all electronic devices prior to coming to class. Do not use headphones, text, email, Facebook, etc. during class. Students who do engage in this behavior will not receive credit for that class session; if*

*you'd rather engage in that activity than in the course activity, please don't attend class meetings. The only way to learn from these texts is to be mentally present.*

*If you are expecting an emergency call, please see the instructor prior to class starting.*

### **- Reading Assignments**

Follow the reading assignments on the course syllabus. All students are expected to have read the assignments before coming to class. Your ability to participate is predicated on your reading prior to the beginning of class. It is especially important that you are able to integrate the reading material with the course lectures. Your grade will be dependent upon you reading the material and being prepared for class.

### **- Class Decorum**

Any class that is based on asking questions has the potential for volatility. Therefore, the expectation is that the arguments and questions presented by students be addressed respectfully. Students are encouraged to question and debate openly in the classroom, but any displays of disrespect will result in being asked to leave the class, and if the violation is severe enough, being removed from the course.

### **- Late Work/Make-Up Examinations**

Essays will be accepted up to one week after the deadline with a penalty of 3% for each day that the essay is late. After one week, no credit will be given for the assignment. Extensions of deadlines for particular students will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Make-up examinations will only be available if prior arrangements have been made or in the case of a documented emergency. Make-up examinations after the exam date will not be given for anything less than an emergency (which will be defined by the instructor), which will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

*Not turning in assignments disqualifies you for earning extra credit for the semester. Any extra credit opportunities that are provided during the semester are designed to enhance grades that are earned on the assignments, not done in lieu of assignments. Any extra credit opportunities made available during the course will be announced in-class and on Blackboard and will be made available to all students.*

## **Grades and Evaluations**

### **- Exams**

There are three exams. The first two exams are each worth 20% of the grade, while the final exam is worth 25%. The exams consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exams are intended to check your progress integrating and comprehending

course readings, lectures, and discussions. More information on the exams will be provided closer to the exam dates.

**- Paper**

One, 4 page paper worth 25% of the course grade.

Students will have a range of topics to choose from for the essay. Each topic will challenge the student to engage with one of the perennial topics in American Political Thought. This paper will require students to submit a full rough draft (which is worth 10% of the paper grade), revise the paper based on the comments, and then submit the final draft. Prompts will be available after the first exam.

**- Course Grade:**

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

First Draft: 10%

Final Draft: 15%

Attendance/Participation: 10%

*Grade Scale:* The letter equivalents of grade percentages are as follows:

A: 93-100%    A-: 90-92.9%    B+: 87-89.9%    B: 83-86.9%    B-: 80-82.9%

C+: 77-79.9%    C: 70-76.9%    D: 60 -69.9%    F: 0-59.9%

**Students with Disabilities**

If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or [drc@niu.edu](mailto:drc@niu.edu).

Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations.

The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### **Academic Honesty**

You are expected to adhere to all the rules, regulations, and standards set forth by the Department of Political Science, Northern Illinois University, and the scholarly community. Students who violate the rules and regulations through cheating, plagiarism or other misconduct, or who assist others in engaging in prohibited conduct, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

The NIU Undergraduate Catalog states:

*Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university. (Undergraduate Catalog)*

Don't plagiarize or cheat; you will be caught. If you have questions regarding plagiarism, please ask me, seek assistance at the campus writing center, or refer to the following website:

<http://polisci.niu.edu/polisci/audience/plagiarism.shtml>

### **Course Reading Schedule**

Class schedule is tentative and subject to change.

- 8/29 1/18 Lecture 1 - Introduction/Syllabus  
- No readings
- 8/31 Lecture 2 - Religious Foundations  
- Mayflower Compact (People, pg. 5-6)  
- John Winthrop: "On Liberty" (People, pg. 14-16)  
- John Winthrop: selections from "A Model of Christian Charity" (CP, pg. 1-6)  
- Roger Williams: "A Plea for Religious Liberty" (People, pg. 20-26)
- 9/5 Lecture 3 - Republican Foundation  
- John Locke: selections "Second Treatise - On Civil Government" (People, pg. 69-87)  
- John Adams: On Government (People, pg. 207-213)

- 9/7 Lecture 4 - American Revolution
- Declaration of Independence (People, pg. 200-204)
  - Thomas Jefferson: Government and Liberty (People, pg. 213-225)
  - Thomas Jefferson and John Adams: selected letters "On Aristocracy" (People, pg. 228-235)
- 9/12 Lecture 5 - Debates over the Constitution - Federalists and Anti-Federalists
- Federalist 1, 10, 39, 47, 51 (People, pg. 287-294, 303-310, 312-315)
  - Anti-Federalist Opposition to the Constitution (People, pg. 327-344)
- 9/14 Lecture 6 - Debates over the Constitution - Jefferson's Commentary
- Thomas Jefferson: selections from "On the Constitution" (People, pg. 320-327)
  - Thomas Jefferson: Letter to James Madison - March 15, 1789 (CP, pg. 6-9)
  - Thomas Jefferson: Letter to James Madison - September 6, 1789 (CP, pg. 9-14)
- 9/19 Lecture 7 - Early Republic
- George Washington: Farewell Address (CP, pg. 14-26)
  - Thomas Jefferson: First Inaugural (CP, pg. 26-29)
  - Thomas Jefferson: Letter to Danbury Baptist Association (CP, pg. 30)
- 9/21 Lecture 8 - First Exam
- No new readings
- 9/26 Lecture 9 - Jacksonian Democracy
- Andrew Jackson, "Proclamation Regarding Nullification" (CP, pg. 31-42)
  - John Calhoun, selection from "Fort Hill Address" (CP, pg. 42-46)
- 9/28 Lecture 10 - Democracy in America
- Author's Introduction, Vol. 1, Part 1, Chapter 2, 4
- 10/3 Lecture 11 - Democracy in America, cont.
- Vol. 1, Part 2, Chapter 2, Selections from chapter 5 (pg. 187-202), Selections from chapter 6 (pg. 220-230), selections from chapter 9 (pg. 274-288)
- 10/5 Lecture 12 - Democracy in America, cont.
- Vol. 2, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2, 5, 8
  - **PAPER TOPICS ASSIGNED**
- 10/10 Lecture 13 - Democracy in America, cont.
- Vol. 2, Part 3, Chapter 8, 9, 11, 12, 13
- 10/12 Lecture 14 - Political and Economic Fracturing
- Orestes Brownson, "On the Laboring Classes" (CP, pg. 46-72)
  - Alexis de Tocqueville, Vol. 2, Part Two, Chapter 19, 20
  - John Calhoun, selections from "Slavery is a Positive Good" (CP, pg. 72-76)

- 10/17 Lecture 15 - Slavery and Abolitionism
- Alexis de Tocqueville, selection from Vol. 1, Part Two, Chapter 10 "Position that the Black Race Occupies in the United States" (pg. 326-336)
  - Selection from Dred Scott v. Sanford (CP, pg. 76-87)
- 10/19 Lecture 16 – Slavery and Abolitionism, cont.
- George Fitzhugh, selections from "Sociology for the South" (CP, pg. 87-91)
  - Alexander Stephens, selections from the "Cornerstone Speech" (CP, pg. 91-95)
- 10/24 Lecture 17 - Slavery and Abolitionism, cont.
- Fredrick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (CP, pg. 95-115)
  - William Lloyd Garrison, selections from "On the Constitution and the Union" (CP, pg. 116-118)
  - **FIRST DRAFTS DUE**
- 10/26 Lecture 18 - Lincoln
- Abraham Lincoln, "Lyceum Address" (CP, pg. 118-125)
  - Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided Speech" (CP, pg. 125-131)
- 10/31 Lecture 19 - Lincoln, cont.
- Abraham Lincoln, "First Inaugural Address" (CP, pg. 132-139)
  - Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address" (CP, pg. 139-140)
  - Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address" (CP, pg. 140-141)
- 11/2 Lecture 20 - Second Exam
- No new readings
- 11/7 Lecture 21 - Race Issues 1865-1900
- Plessy v. Ferguson (CP, pg. 141-149)
  - Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Speech" from Up from Slavery (CP, pg. 150-159)
  - Booker T. Washington, "Democracy and Education" (CP, pg. 159-163)
- 11/9 Lecture 22 - Race Issues 1865-1900, cont.
- W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth" (CP, pg. 163-178)
  - W.E.B. DuBois, "Niagara Movement Speech" (CP, pg. 178-180)
- 11/14 Lecture 23 - Economic Issues 1865-1900
- Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth" (CP, pg. 181-189)
  - William Graham Sumner, "The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over" (CP, pg. 189-198)
  - **GRADED FIRST DRAFTS RETURNED**
- 11/16 Lecture 24 - Progressivism and Its Reaction
- Seneca Falls Declaration (CP, pg. 203-206)
  - Theodore Roosevelt, "Ordered Liberty" (CP, pg. 206-212)

- Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points" (CP, pg. 212-217)

11/21 Lecture 25 - Progressivism and Its Reaction, cont.

- Calvin Coolidge, "The Destiny of America" (CP, pg. 217-223)
- Franklin Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address" (CP, pg. 223-233)
- Franklin Roosevelt, "1944 State of the Union Address" (CP, pg. 234-243)
- ***FINAL DRAFT DUE***

### **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

11/28 Lecture 26 - Civil Rights Movement

- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (CP, pg. 243-257)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (CP, pg. 257-260)
- Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (CP, pg. 260-276)

11/30 Lecture 27 - Contemporary Reflections

- Lyndon Johnson, "Great Society Speech" (CP, pg. 276-281)
- Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence Speech" (CP, pg. 281-290)
- Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address" (CP, pg. 290-296)
- Barack Obama, "First Inaugural Address" (CP, pg. 296-304)

12/5 Lecture 28 - Future of Democracy in America

- Tocqueville, Vol. 2, Part 4, Chapter 1, 2, 6, 8
- Orestes Brownson: On The Democratic Principle (CP, pg. 304-321)

12/7 Review/Spillover Day

12/14

**Final Exam (10:00 – 11:50am)**