American Political Thought
POLI 387

Meetings: Mondays & Wednesdays @ 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.  111 Maybank Hall

Texts:  
The Federalist, Hamilton, Jay, Madison  
Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville

Translator-Editor /Publisher:
Carey & McClellan /Liberty Fund  
Mansfield & Winthrop /Chicago

Subject: Our survey of American political thought will focus on two seminal works. We will read selections amounting to about half of each work. The Federalist was written in 1787-8 as a series of essays (85 in total) published under the pen name Publius in a New York newspaper and then throughout the 13 colonies with the aim of persuading Americans to ratify the Constitution drafted in Philadelphia by the Constitutional Convention. This work offers us a good look at the political thought of our founders. Democracy in America was written by a French nobleman after a trip through North America in 1838 which contains Tocqueville’s observations and reflections on a rich range of topics concerning democracy in the United States. Because he thought democracy was inevitable for the West, he was particularly interested in America’s bold experiment, and he provides us with a fascinating look at who we are and where we come from.

Format: I would like for this course to be a seminar style course. To this end I have arranged the readings by week of from 40-50 pages which will be covered in two class meetings. Each of us will share the responsibility for getting everyone prepared by signing up for one week and writing an exegesis (approx. 5-8 pages) on the reading assignment for that week to be made available to the rest of the class before our meetings for that week (Sunday at 12:00 p.m.). I will also expect each of the rest of the class to write a short, informal comment on your classmate’s exegesis by Wednesday 10:00 p.m. (see handout on Exegeses). Because we will be using a Discussion in Oaks to circulate these papers, everyone will have a chance to read everyone else’s comments as well as my own responses by class time, and I will expect everyone to have done so (see handout on Oaks Discussion).

One term paper will be required, an interpretative essay of 12-15 pages due at the end of the semester. Part of your assignment will be to set your own topic in consultation with me. I will offer some suggestions as we proceed in the semester. It is highly recommended that you begin your thinking and consultation well before the end of the term. For more details about term papers, see forthcoming handout About Essays.

Grading: Your term paper is worth approximately 1/2 of your grade; your exegeses, and your comments 1/4 each. (Comments are graded primarily by the number you hand in [there will be 13 opportunities] and secondarily by quality.) Participation in class and attendance could also affect your grade.

Grading scale:  
A = 90-100%  
B = 80-90%  
C = 70-80%  
D = 60-70%  
F = below 60%
**Plagiarism policy:** F for the course for plagiarism on all writing assignments, including informal paragraphs (besides copying from other students, this includes undocumented use of Internet text summaries like SparkNotes!). My determination and assignment of any penalties are subject to the review of the Honor Board. If there is any question about proper use of sources, paraphrases, or quotation marks, please talk to me. (See the College’s Honor Code for more details)

**Cell phone policy:** You may use a cell phone in class, and this includes texting, twittering, etc., **only if** you have cleared it with me (e.g. expecting an urgent call). Otherwise, if I catch you using a cell phone, I will ask you to leave class and count you absent for the day.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Please see me as early as you can in the semester so that we can make any accommodations that will be necessary or desirable for your learning experience.

**Office Hours:** I encourage you to come talk to me outside of class about philosophy, your essays, any problems with the course, or anything else. I am in my office during the following hours (please feel free to make an appointment if these are not convenient times):

Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.

### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed. Aug. 21</td>
<td>Intro to Course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Aug. 26</td>
<td><em>The Federalist</em> Advantages of a more perfect union papers 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14</td>
<td>[31]</td>
<td>week 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Sept. 16</td>
<td>Dem. in A. v.1, pt 1, chs. 3-4; pt. 2, chs. 1-4, 6</td>
<td>[48]</td>
<td>week 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. Sept. 23</td>
<td>Dem. in A. Majority v.1 pt. 2, chs. 7-8</td>
<td>[30]</td>
<td>week 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Sept. 30</td>
<td>Dem. in A. Maintaining a democratic republic</td>
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<td>week 9</td>
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Wed. Oct. 2 v.1, intro; pt.1, chs. 1-2
Mon. Oct. 7  v.1, pt 1, chs. 3-4; pt. 2, chs. 1-4, 6
Wed. Oct. 9  v.1 pt. 2, chs. 7-8
Mon. Oct. 14 Fall Break
Wed. Oct. 16 Dem. in A. Majority v.1 pt. 2, chs. 7-8
Mon. Oct. 21 Dem. in A. Maintaining a democratic republic
Wed. Oct. 23 v. 1, pt. 2, ch.9 [48]

Mon. Oct. 28 Dem. in A. Intellect week 10 _______________

Mon. Nov. 4 Dem. in A. Sentiments week 11 _______________
Wed. Nov. 6 v. 2, pt. 2, chs. 1-4, 8-11, 13-20 [44]

Mon. Nov. 11 Dem. in A. Mores week 12 _______________

Mon. Nov. 18 Dem. in A. Political Society week 13 _______________
Wed. Nov. 20 v.2, pt. 4, chs. 1-7 [34]

Wed. Nov. 27 Thanksgiving Break

Mon. Dec. 2 Conclusion