

HERTOG 2022 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Jenna Silber Storey, Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

Students will consider the question of American national character through a close reading of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

Preparing for the course: This course will be run as a seminar, at the center of which is a conversation that depends on efforts of all participants. You should plan to reach each of these selections carefully, at least once, before coming to class. Take notes; mark up the book. Above all, keep track of the questions the reading raises in your mind.

"A question is a form of desire," [Leon Kass](#) says. A good question gives shape to what it is you want to know. After you read the selection for the day, write down the questions it brings to your mind. What intrigues you? Inspires or confuses? Causes you to embrace the book ecstatically? Or throw it across the room in frustration? Start there. And articulate your reaction as a question that you can pose to the author.

Then, look for the response the author might give. What parts of the text address your thoughts or concerns? Identify one or two, and bring your questions and passages to class. Each day, I'll ask several of you to present your questions and texts.

Course Materials:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop
- Course Packet

Resources:

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites.

Relevant pages include [Tocqueville](#), [The Federalist](#), [John Locke](#), [Martin Diamond](#), [Harvey Mansfield](#), and [Herbert Storing](#).

Monday, July 4, 2022

Happy Independence Day!

Tuesday, July 5, 2022

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session I: What is America?

Readings:

- Jenna Storey, Short biography of Tocqueville
- Frontispiece of the Great Bible, 1539
- Alexis de Tocqueville, Introduction, *Democracy in America*, pp. 3–15
- Vol. 1, Part 1, Chs. 2 & 3:
 - “On the Point of Departure and Its Importance for the Future of the Anglo Americans” and
 - “Social States of the Anglo-Americans”

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session II: Politics

Readings:

- Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 4: “Of the Principle of the Sovereignty of the People in America”
- Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 5: “Necessity of Studying What Takes Place in the Particular States before Speaking of the Government of the Union,” pp. 53–65
- Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 20: “How Aristocracy Could Issue from Industry”
- Vol. 2, Part 4, Chs. 1–3 and 6–8:
 - “Equality Naturally Gives Men the Taste for Free Institutions,”
 - “That the Idea of Democratic Peoples in the Matter of Government Naturally Favorable to the Concentration of Powers,”
 - “That the Sentiments of Democratic Peoples are in Accord with Their Ideas to Bring Them to Concentrate Power,”
 - “What Kind of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear,”
 - “Continuation of the Preceding Chapters,” and
 - “General View of the Subject”

Thursday, July 7, 2022

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session III: Public Opinion, Individualism, & the Family

Readings:

- Vol 2, Part 1, Chs. 1–2 and 5:
 - “On the Philosophic Method of the Americans,”
 - “On the Principal Source of Beliefs among Democratic Peoples,” and
 - “How, in the United States, Religion Knows How to Make Use of Democratic Instincts”
- Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 2: “On Individualism in Democratic Countries”
- Vol. 2, Part 3, Chs. 8–12:
 - “Influence of Democracy on the Family,”

- “Education of Girls in the United States,”
- “How the Girl is Found Beneath the Features of the Wife,”
- “How Equality of Conditions Contributes to Maintaining Good Mores in America,” and
- “How the Americans Understand the Equality of Man and Woman”

Friday, July 8, 2022

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session IV: Studies & Occupations

Readings:

- Vol. 2, Part 1, Chs. 10 and 17:
 - “Why the Americans Apply Themselves to the Practice of the Sciences Rather than to the Theory,” and
 - “On Some Sources of Poetry in Democratic Nations”
- Vol. 2, Part 2, Chs. 10–13:
 - “On the Taste for Material Well-Being in America,”
 - “On the Particular Effects That the Love of Material Enjoyments Produces in Democratic Countries,”
 - “Why Certain Americans Display Such an Exalted Spiritualism,” and
 - “Why the Americans Show Themselves So Restive in the Midst of Their Well-Being”
- Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 16: “How the Excessive Love of Well-Being Can be Harmful to Well-Being”