This course is an introduction to political theory through the study of three major texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first text we will discuss is Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835/1840), which one critic has described as both the best book “ever written on democracy and the best ever written on America.” We will then turn our attention to Volume 1 of *Capital* (1867), which its author Karl Marx appropriately subtitled *A Critique of Political Economy*. We will end the semester with a discussion of W.E.B. Du Bois’ presciently anticipated *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), in which the “problem of the color-line.” Each in their own day, these texts provided critical insights into the nature of democracy, capitalism, and race. What were these insights, and how were they achieved? How pertinent are they today, what are their possible limits? Are these texts compatible, and might we learn from their comparison? These are among the questions we will consider in this course, both through class discussions and essay-writing.

**Requirements**

This being a reading- and writing-intensive course, the first requirement is that you come to class having done the reading carefully and willing to discuss it. This is a seminar-style course, which means students’ participation is essential. To help facilitate our reading and discussion, you will often be given reading questions in advance, and these will serve as a basis for in-class discussions. Please make sure to bring your written answers to class every session. Please also make sure to bring the books to class.

You will be asked to write three papers over the course of the term. The first two will be 4-5 pages long, and will account for 20% of your grade. The third essay will be 7-8 pages, and will account for 40% of your grade. Your participation in class discussion will account for the remaining 20%.

Please note that attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the semester. You are also expected to meet with the instructor in office hours at least once over the course of the semester, as well as with the teaching assistant.
**Books for purchase**

Unless you already own a copy of these texts, **please be sure to obtain the editions specified below.** We will be making frequent reference to text, and you will be citing pages in your papers; it is important that we all use the same edition.

Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (specific edition/translation to be discussed in class)


**Time commitment**

This course should require a total time commitment of approximately ten hours per week. Of this, students will spend two hours and thirty minutes in class; they will spend the remaining time engaged in reading, thinking, and writing.

**UWM Policies and Procedures**

In this course, we will abide by the UWM policies and procedures as described in the following document: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf)

**Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document: [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf)

**Religious observances**

Students who plan to observe religious holidays should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)

**Students called to active military duty**

Students who are called to active military duty should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document: [http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm)
Schedule of Readings & Assignments
(as of 2/22/20)

Week 1. 22 January. Introduction to the course

Week 2. 27-29 January. Tocqueville (1): Democracy and Tyranny

  Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America
  Volume I: Author’s Introduction; Part I, Ch. 1 (skim), Ch. 2-4; Part II, Ch. 7.

Week 3. 3-5 February. Tocqueville (2) Democracy and Individualism

  Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America
  Volume II: Part III, Ch. 5; Part IV, Ch. 6, 7.
  Vol. II: Part II, Ch. 1, 2, [3], 4, 8-11, 13; Part III, Ch. 17.

Week 4. 10-12 February. Tocqueville (3) Making Democracy Work

  Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America
  Vol. I: Part I, Ch. 5 (pp. 61-70, 87-98); Part II, Ch, 2-4, 6, 8, 9;
  Vol. II: Part II, Ch. 5-7.

Week 5. 17-19 February. Tocqueville (4) Democracy, Inequality, and Revolution

  Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America
  Vol. I: Part II, Ch. 10
  Vol. II: Part II, Ch. 19, 20; Part III, 7, 9-10, 21.

Week 6. 24-26 February. Tocqueville Paper due

Week 7. 2-4 March. Marx (1). The Commodity & Money

  Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3

Week 8. 9-11 March. Marx (2). Surplus value & Exploitation

  Capital, Chapters 4 5 6
  Capital, Chapters 7, 8, 9

Week 9. 16-18 March. No class (Spring recess)

Week 10. 23-25 March. Marx (3). Co-operation, Machines

  Capital, Chapters 12, 13, 14
  Capital, Chapter 15 [or Grundriße, fragment on the machines]

Week 11. 30 March-1 April. Marx (4) The Origins of Capitalism
*Capital*, Chapter 26-33 [selections]

**Week 12. 6-8 April. Second paper due**

**Week 13. 13-15 April. DuBois (1)**

The Forethought (pp.1-2)
Chapters I-III

**Week 14. 20-22 April. DuBois (2)**

Chapters IV-VI

**Week 15. 27-29 April. DuBois (3)**

Chapters VIII-X

**Week 16. 4-6 May. Final paper writing**
1. What is Tocqueville’s purpose in writing *Democracy in America*?

2. What are the differences between France and America? Why are they important to Tocqueville’s understanding of democracy?

3. Why are “origins” important for Tocqueville? Are they still important? Why? Why not?

4. What does Tocqueville mean by democracy?

5. Central to democracy, for Tocqueville, is a certain distribution of property, wealth, income, opportunity. What are the features of this distribution?
Tocqueville Reading Questions #2
(3-5 February)

1. How are master/servant relations in a democratic society different from what they are in an aristocratic society?

2. What does Tocqueville mean when he says it was the law of inheritance that caused the final advance of equality?

3. Tocqueville speaks of tyranny in different registers: he evokes the possible tyranny of a single person, but also the tyranny of the majority, and the tyranny of a certain kind of state – one that doesn’t so much torment people as degrade them. What special kinds of power do the second and third exercise?

4. Why do democratic nations display a more passionate and lasting love for equality than for freedom?

5. What is individualism, according to Tocqueville, and how is it promoted by democracy or “equality”?
6. How, in turn, is individualism conducive to tyranny?

7. Tocqueville says that ‘Americans have used liberty to combat the individualism born of equality.’ What does he mean?

8. How do Americans ‘combat individualism by the doctrine of self-interest properly understood’?

9. How is democracy conducive to a taste for physical comfort, and how does it make people restless?
Tocqueville Reading Questions #3  
(10-12 February)

1. When studying democracy in America, why is it necessary to examine what happens in individual states before considering the union as a whole?

2. What does Tocqueville mean when he writes that “local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science”?

3. What does he mean when he says that trial by jury may not be good for the litigants, but that it is “very good for those who have to decide the case”?

4. What role do each of the following play: lawyers, political association, freedom of press and of assembly, and religion?

5. “Extreme freedom corrects the abuse of freedom,” writes Tocqueville, “and extreme democracy forestall the dangers of democracy.” What do you think he means by this?
Tocqueville Reading Questions #4
(17-19 February)

1. In discussing the “three races” in the United States Tocqueville has a striking line in the introductory sections of Chapter 10: “These topics are like tangents to my subject, being American, but not democratic, and my main business has been to describe democracy.” What do you suppose he is trying to say here?

2. Why does Tocqueville think that Native Americans (“Indian” in his language) will be killed off?

3. Why does Tocqueville believe changing the law is not enough to secure equality for blacks? What are the three prejudices that haunt America?

4. Why is inequality more intense in those states without slavery?

5. Why does he say, “The most formidable evil threatening the future of the United States is the presence of blacks on their soil” (340)? Why does he claim that “slavery...does not attack the American confederation directly, through interests, but indirectly, through mores?” (376)
6. “While there is less constraint on girls [in America] than anywhere else,” writes Tocqueville, "a wife submits to stricter obligations." What does Tocqueville mean by this?