



SELF PROGRAM 2021-2022

Tocqueville, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in the Internet Age

Professor Christopher Jon DELOGU

christopher-jon.delogu@univ-lyon3.fr / c.jon.delogu@gmail.com

Course information

Number of credits: 6 credits

Contact hours: 30 hours

Hours taught per week: 2,5 hours

Teaching period: spring semester 2022

Course description:

This course will examine **Democracy in the Internet Age** through the lens of writings by the French traveler, social scientist, and politician **Alexis de Tocqueville** (1805-1859), especially his monumental two-volume study *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (*Democracy in America*, 1835, 1840)—a work that many consider to be the greatest book about America ever written and the greatest single study of democracy ever written. Class time will be divided into four parts: 1. a review of the Age of Jackson (1828-1836) that Tocqueville witnessed firsthand; 2. a commentary of selections from *Democracy in America*; 3. an examination of a chain of failed democratic experiments in France (1789, 1830, 1848, 1871) with selections from Tocqueville's second classic work, *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution* (1856); 4.

an examination of the evolution of democracy in America, France, and around the world, over the past 150 years, and especially since 1989 in the post-Cold War “Internet age.” We will also study contemporary challenges to horizontal democracy in America and elsewhere raised by neofascist and authoritarian trends advancing in various guises under the threatening context of global surveillance capitalism, pandemics, and global warming.

Prerequisites:

None

Course Outline: class consists of 12 sessions of 2 ½ hours each = 30 contact hours.

Calendar: (revised dates will be provided in a new syllabus in January 2022)

1/23 Week 1 Who was Tocqueville? What is democracy? Why should I care?

1/30 Week 2 Reading: Delogu, Introduction + chapter 1, or further...

2/6 Week 3 Reading: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

2/13 Week 4 Commentary of Volume 1 + Delogu, chapter 3

2/20 Week 5 Commentary of Volume 2 + Delogu, chapter 5&6

2/27 Week 6 Mid-Term Exam (in-class + take home)

VACATION – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK ONE WEEK ()

3/12 Week 7 Democracy and its sceptics around the world in the 19th century

3/19 Week 8 Democracy and fascism in the 20th century (pre-1989) + Delogu, ch. 6, 7

3/26 Week 9 Democracy, neofascism, and authoritarianism in the Internet Age

4/2 Week 10 Student Presentations + **1st draft of paper submitted for peer review**

4/9 Week 11 Student Presentations + **1st draft w/corrections due back to author**

Week 12 **Final Exam** in class + **final version of paper due**

Assessment:

Your grade for this course will be computed from 4 equally weighted assignments: **Mid-Term Exam, Oral Presentation, Final Paper, Final Exam**. Quality peer-editing and in-class participation can also boost your grade. Basic attendance is a minimum requirement.

Mid-Term: Answers to 20 factual questions about *Democracy in America* (in class) OR Short essay (800-word essay or textual commentary of passage from DIA, 36-hour take home).

Final Exam: Short essay (dissertation or textual commentary about Democracy)

Paper guidelines:

Write an essay that identifies the argument and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of a **scholarly** (i.e., not journalism) English-language article, chapter, or book on Tocqueville and/or Democracy, Fascism, or Authoritarianism (in the contemporary French context or in some other area of the world and time period). You will first do library and Internet research to find a suitable “target text”; then read it (taking notes); then write an outline of your “talking points”; then write your factual summary of the argument followed by your **argued** comments (an argument is a claim supported by reasons and evidence). Target texts must be pre-approved by the instructor.

PLEASE: Times Roman 12, double-spaced, 1-inch (2 cm) margins. 1,500 words (+/- 10%). Respect word count limits, your classmate’s work, and all deadlines. **Electronic submissions only; send .doc or .docx files (not PDF) to: c.jon.delogu@gmail.com**

Sample file titles (all must contain the **name of the author !!!)**

2020 self TD paper CHEN (imagine the author’s family name is CHEN)
2020 self TD paper CHEN md (imagine Mary Darke read the paper)
2020 self TD paper CHEN v2 (this is the file name of CHEN’s final paper)

Final Exam: Choice between a short commentary of a two-page passage, or a short essay based on a quotation or key words (e.g., “Equality in *Democracy in America*”)

Plagiarism is stealing and lying about it. It’s illegal and disrespectful. Don’t do it.

Attendance:

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed otherwise no mark will be given. An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course. **Oral Presentations will be scheduled starting in week 8.**

Bibliography:

No books are required for purchase, but several will be recommended in a bibliography. Good English translations of *Democracy in America* are Bevan and Goldhammer; a good French edition is Garnier-Flammarion in two volumes. DIA is also available online in many languages. Students may buy or read online (free) Mr. Delogu’s book *Tocqueville and*

Democracy in the Internet Age (2014). <<http://openhumanitiespress.org/tocqueville-and-democracy-in-the-internet-age.html>>

Many readings will be posted on the course module of the e-learning platform at Lyon 3 known as Moodle, and/or sent as attachments in group e-mails. Students may wish to acquire one book on the course topic that will be the focus of their paper (and oral presentation).

I'm glad you're here!

I am enthusiastic about teaching this class! I look forward to your questions and comments and to learning along with you from what you say in class and from your written work. We're in this together—not brothers or equals exactly, but nevertheless partners—exploring a topic of general interest no matter whether you are a democracy sympathizer or skeptic.