American Democracy

This course explores the structure and dynamics of American democratic culture, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape democracy in the contemporary United States. We will focus our analysis on three major areas: (1) the founding documents; (2) democratic values and concepts; and (3) the relationship between the United States and the world. We will analyze essential characteristics of the American democratic experience, with particular emphasis on how the American democratic tradition has grown and developed over time. To examine our subject from multiple perspectives, we will read widely in primary documents, undertake cross-cultural conversations, and apply the disciplinary methods of both history and political science.

The course is part of the American Democracy Project. The Project consists of two parallel partnerships, one between Al-Quds University and Oberlin College and the other between Tel Aviv University and Oberlin College. In spring 2010, using a common sourcebook of readings, courses on the American democratic experience will be taught in tandem at the three institutions. We plan to bring the participants in this Project together for a face-to-face seminar at Oberlin in July 2010.

Format: The class meets regularly on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 to 10:50 am. Most class meeting will be devoted to group discussion, but there will also be a lecture, films, and student presentations. Class attendance is mandatory and participation in group discussions is expected. Before many class meetings, students will be required to post comments on the American Democracy Moodle site <democracy.oberlin.edu>, which will be shared with students at Al-Quds University and Tel Aviv University. For some class meetings, we hope to arrange real-time, live videoconferences with our colleagues in the Middle East.

Evaluation: Students will be graded on the basis of class participation, including postings on Moodle, and an independent research project. The basic formula is 35% for class participation, 30% for prospectus, progress report, and oral presentation of the independent research project, and 35% for a research paper 20-25 pages in length. The professors reserve the right to exercise some discretion in assigning final grades.
**Honor Code:** All course work is governed by Oberlin's Honor Code. If you have a question about how the Honor Code applies to a particular assignment, you should ask the professors in advance of the due date.

**Assigned readings:** Students will be supplied with the following course readings free of charge.

- Imad Abu-Kishek et al., compilers, *Readings in American Democratic Culture* (Jerusalem: Al-Manar Press, 2010) [referred to below as Sourcebook]

Additional readings may be posted on the Moodle site as the course proceeds.

**Schedule of classes and assignments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Feb. 8</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 *Note: Please post your self-introduction on the Moodle site before the start of this class.* |
| Mon., Feb. 22 | Introduction to independent research project                             |
| Wed., Feb. 24 | Lecture (via videoconference): Dr. Mohammed Dajani of Al-Quds University addressing students at Tel Aviv University | Mohammed S. Dajani Daoud, “The Two Faces of American Studies” in Sourcebook |
| Mon., Mar. 1  | Discussion of “Foundations I” in Sourcebook  
 • Declaration of Independence (1776)  
 • U.S. Constitution in Its Original Form (1787)  
 • Bill of Rights: First Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution (1791) |
| Wed., Mar. 3  | Film: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (130 minutes)                       |
| Mon., Mar. 8  | Discussion of “Foundations II” in Sourcebook  
 • Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address” (1863)  
 • Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution (1865-1870)  
 • Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1920) |
| Wed., Mar. 10 | Discussion of prospectuses for research projects, to be posted by noon, Tues., Mar. 9, and read by everyone in advance of Wed. session. |
| Mon., Mar. 15 | Discussion of “Sovereignty of the People” in Sourcebook  
| Tom Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)  
| Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas on Popular Sovereignty and the Spread of Slavery (1854, 1858)  
| Note: This in-class discussion will include students at Al-Quds University by videoconference. |
| U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)  
| “The Southern Manifesto” (1956)  
| Revised prospectuses due  
| Note: The film *To Kill a Mockingbird* (129 minutes) will be shown outside the regular class time. |
| Mon., Mar. 22 | Discussion of “Representative Democracy” in Sourcebook  
| James Madison, “Federalist No. 10” (1787)  
| Anti-federalist Melancton Smith on Representation (1788)  
| Note: This in-class discussion will include students at Tel Aviv University by videoconference. |
| U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Abrams v. United States* and Dissent by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes (1919)  
| U.S. Supreme Court Decision in the Pentagon Papers Case (1971)  
| ---Spring Break--- |
| Mon., Apr. 5 | Film: *Norma Rae* (110 minutes) |
| Wed., Apr. 7 | Discussion of progress reports on research projects, to be posted by noon, Tues., Apr. 6, and read by everyone in advance of Wed. session |
| Mon., Apr. 12 | Discussion of “Equality” in Sourcebook  
| The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions Adopted by the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention (1848)  
| Jane Addams, "Why Women Should Vote" (1910)  
| Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" Speech (1963)  
| President Lyndon B. Johnson, "We Shall Overcome" Speech (1965) |
| Wed., Apr. 14 | Discussion of “Majority Rule/Minority Rights” in Sourcebook  
| President Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address (1801)  
| Henry David Thoreau, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" (1849)  
| Mississippi Declaration of Secession (1861)  
<p>| President Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (1861) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mon., Apr. 19 | Discussion of “Governmental Separation of Powers” in Sourcebook | • James Madison, "Federalist No. 51"
• President Andrew Jackson's Message of Protest to the U.S. Senate (1834)
• U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary Proposes the Impeachment of President Richard Nixon (1974) |
| Wed., Apr. 21 | Discussion of “Political Pluralism” in Sourcebook     | • Alexis de Tocqueville, "Relation of Civil to Political Associations," in Vol. 2 of *Democracy in America* (1840)
• Michael Massing, "Deal Breakers" (2002)
• Lou Dobbs, "Lobbying against America" (2005)
• Robert J. Samuelson "Lobbying is Democracy in Action" (2008) |
• Justice Antonin Scalia Argues Key Parts of Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act are Unconstitutional (2003)
Note: The film *All the President’s Men* (138 minutes) will be shown outside the regular class time. |
| Wed., Apr. 28 | Discussion of “Tolerance and Compromise” in Sourcebook  | • U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Korematsu v. United States* and Dissent by Justice Frank Murphy (1944)
• Civil Liberties Act of 1988: "Restitution for World War II Internment of Japanese-Americans and Aleuts"
• President Barack Obama's Speech on Abortion at the University of Notre Dame's Commencement (2009) |
| Mon., May 3  | Discussion of “American Democracy and the World” in the Sourcebook | • President James Monroe, "The Monroe Doctrine" (1823)
• President Woodrow Wilson, "The Fourteen Points" (1918)
• President John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address" (1961)
• Carl Oglesby, "Let Us Shape the Future" (1965)
• President Barack Obama's Speech in Cairo: "A New Beginning" (2009) |
| Wed., May 5  | Presentations of research projects                    |                                                                                  |
| Mon., May 10 | Presentations of research projects                    |                                                                                  |
| Wed., May 12 | Presentations of research projects                    |                                                                                  |
| Thurs., May 20 | Research papers (final projects) due by 11 am        |                                                                                  |