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 associated with the American Democratic Culture Partnerships (ADCP). The ADCP 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 2011, 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 all three courses together for a face-to-face seminar at Oberlin in June 2011, followed by a trip to Washington, DC.
**Format:** The class meets regularly on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 to 10:50 am. Some class meetings will include real-time videoconferences with our colleagues in the Middle East and may start early or occur at specially scheduled times. Most class meetings will be devoted to group discussion, but there will also be at least one lecture, films, and student presentations. Class attendance is mandatory and participation in group discussions is expected. Before most class meetings, students will be required to post short comments (100-150 words) in response to questions on the American Democracy Moodle site <democracy.oberlin.edu>, which will be shared with students at Al-Quds University and Tel Aviv University. The postings are intended to help you consolidate your understanding of the reading and prepare yourself for class discussion. For that reason, they are due no later than 7:30 am prior to the class for which they are assigned. You are encouraged to cite specific passages (including page numbers) from relevant readings in your postings. Each student is allowed to skip one—but only one—required Moodle posting over the course of the semester without penalty.

**Evaluation:** Students will be graded on the basis of a short paper (4-5 pages); class participation, including postings on Moodle; and an independent research project, including a prospectus (3-4 pages), progress report (3-4 pages), oral presentation (10-12 minutes), and final paper (20-25 pages). The basic formula for calculating final grades is 15% for the short paper; 30% for class participation; 5% for the prospectus; 5% for the progress report; 10% for the oral presentation; and 35% for the final paper. 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 books:** Students will be supplied with the following books free of charge.

- Imad AbuKishek et al., compilers, *Readings in American Democratic Culture* (Jerusalem: Al-Quds University Publishing Press, 2010) [Sourcebook]

**Schedule of classes and assignments (subject to changes that will be posted on the Moodle site):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon., Feb. 7</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., Feb. 9</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Nusseibeh, <em>Once Upon a Country</em>, 3-72 (middle of page)</td>
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<td>Note:</td>
<td>Please post your self-introduction on the Moodle site before the start of this class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon., Feb. 14</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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Mon., Feb. 14  Discussion
• Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, 1-20, 249-255, 311-377, 482-495 [on Moodle]

Wed., Feb. 16  Discussion
• Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, 72-170

• 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., Feb. 23  Lecture (via videoconference): Dr. Mohammed Dajani of Al-Quds University addressing students at Tel Aviv University
• Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi, “The Two Faces of American Studies” in Sourcebook, 7-19

Mon., Feb. 28  Introduction to Research Projects
**Short paper due in class**

Wed., Mar. 2  Film: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (130 minutes)

Mon., Mar. 7  Discussion of “Foundations II” in Sourcebook, 39-44
• 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)

Tues., Mar. 8  Prospectus for research project due on Moodle by 5 pm

Wed., Mar. 9  Discussion of research prospectuses

Mon., Mar. 14  Discussion of “Sovereignty of the People” in Sourcebook, 45-57
• Tom Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
• Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas on Popular Sovereignty and the Spread of Slavery (1854, 1858).

• U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
• “The Southern Manifesto” (1956)
*Note*: An episode of *Eyes on the Prize* will be shown outside the regular class time this week.

Mon., Mar. 21  Discussion of “Representative Democracy” in Sourcebook, 67-77
• James Madison, “Federalist No. 10” (1787)
• Anti-federalist Melancton Smith on Representation (1788)

• U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Abrams v. United States* and
Dissent by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes (1919)

- U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Pentagon Papers Case (1971)

Fri., Mar. 25 Revised prospectus due on Moodle by 5 pm

---Spring Break---

Mon., Apr. 4 Discussion of “Equality” in Sourcebook, 95-118

- 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)

Note: The films Not for Ourselves Alone and Norma Rae will be shown outside the regular class time this week.

Wed., Apr. 6 Discussion of “Majority Rule/Minority Rights” in Sourcebook, 119-140

- President Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address (1801)
- Henry David Thoreau, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" (1849)
- Mississippi Declaration of Secession (1861)
- President Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (1861)

Mon., Apr. 11 Discussion of “Governmental Separation of Powers” in Sourcebook, 141-157

- 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. 13 Discussion of “Political Pluralism” in Sourcebook, 158-174

- Alexis de Toqueville, "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)

Sun., Apr. 17 Progress report due on Moodle by 5 p.m.,

Mon., Apr. 18 Discussion of progress reports

Wed., Apr. 20 Discussion of “Transparency and Accountability”

- U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission and Dissent by Justice John Paul Stevens (2010) [online]

Mon., Apr. 25 Film: All the President's Men (140 minutes)
Wed., Apr. 27  Discussion of “Tolerance and Compromise” in Sourcebook, 188-200
   • 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 2   Discussion of “American Democracy and the World” in Sourcebook, 201-232
   • 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 4   Presentations of research projects

Mon., May 9   Presentations of research projects
Wed., May 11  Presentations of research projects

Thur., May 19 Research papers (final projects) due by 11 am