

History Seminar: "The Democratic Tradition In America"  
HIS 520  
Dr. Sicius  
Sullivan Hall Room 202  
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305 255 6599  
Office Hours: M/W 12:30-1:30 p.m.  
T /TH 10:30-2:30 p.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** An in depth study of the democratic tradition as it has evolved in the modern world

**INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES:** Blended online class with one class meeting at the beginning of the semester and one at the end.

**STUDENT GOALS:** Students will understand major trends in the development of modern democracy and how historians have interpreted those developments.

**STUDENT OUTCOMES:** The student who successfully completes this course will:

1. Understand major trends in the development of modern Democracy
2. Know how to develop a bibliography
3. Improve internet research skills for accessing primary sources .
4. Be able to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources
5. Compare conflicting interpretations or schools of thought about world events and individual contributions to history.
6. Evaluate the role of history in shaping identity and character.

**GRADING:** Outcomes mentioned above will be assessed in the following manner:

1. "Major Developments in American Democracy" : On Line Discussion Board.
2. "Developing Bibliography": Library Use /Information Literacy Assignment (see Assignment section of black board)
3. "Improve Internet Research Skills": Online research assignments.
4. "Interpretation of primary and secondary sources ": Online discussion
5. "Comparing Conflicting Interpretations" Online Discussion Boards
6. "Evaluate role of History" On Line Discussion Board

The above mentioned assessments will be weighted as follows:

On line Discussion Board	55 %
Library Use Assignment (Annotated Bibliography)	20 %
On Line Research Assignments	25 %

**EXPECTATIONS:** This will be an online class but students must be at the two class meetings. If for some reason a student can not attend these two meetings an individual meeting with the professor must be arranged. Online discussion is an integral part of

the class. Students are expected to participate and to be courteous. There should be no SHOUTING, and opinions of others are to be respected.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians (7th Edition)* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2009) ISBN-10: 0205687539

Robert Wiebe, *Self Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy.* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996) ISBN-10: 0226895637

Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America.* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003) ISBN-10: 0140447601.

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It.* (New York: Vintage, 1989) ISBN-10: 0679723153

Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy and Free Markets in the Twenty- First Century* New York: Public Affairs, 2004) ISBN-10: 1586482068

### **SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS .**

#### **WEEK ONE : (April 14, 2010) In Class Meeting:**

1. Class Expectations
2. Review of Blackboard
3. Discussion of Required Readings
4. Discussion of Library Use Assignment
5. What is History?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Read Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 7 of Gilderhus, *History and Historians* (You will find this reading on Blackboard @ *Documents* Section) then on the Blackboard@ *Discussion Board*, Comment on the following questions and then make at least three comments on other student comments;

1. Why Study History?
2. What is the role of the professional historian in the modern world?

**(Discussion Board will close on May 23)**

#### **WEEK TWO:**

1. **On Line Research Assignment:** Find a Document from the 1820-40's period in American History that expresses pride in the common man. Explain why you picked the document. Use sources mentioned in bibliography below. Enter this information on Discussion Board. Then comment on someone else's contribution .

**(Discussion Board will close on May 30)**

#### **2. De Tocqueville's Idea of Democracy in America.**

**Using the Discussion Board, comment on the following statements made by De Tocqueville and then also make three comments on other student comments.**

1. Democracy is directly related to the “general equality of condition of the people in America.”
2. “Any attempt to check democracy would be in that case [an attempt] to resist the will of God”
3. “The tie of language is perhaps the most durable that can unite mankind.”
4. “Sometimes the zeal for regulation induces [people] to descend to the most frivolous particulars”
5. I do not believe that there is a country in the world where, in proportion to the population, there are so few ignorant, and at the same time so few learned individuals”
6. “...the power vested in the American Courts of Justice of pronouncing a statute to be unconstitutional, forms one of the most powerful barriers which has ever been devised against the tyranny of political assemblies.”
7. The president of the United States possesses almost royal prerogatives, which he has no opportunity of exercising, and the privileges which he can at present use are very circumscribed.”. The laws allow him to be very strong, but circumstances keep him weak. . .”
8. “A long war almost always reduces nations to the wretched alternative of being abandoned to ruin or defeat, or to despotism by success.”
9. “The taste for well being is the prominent and indelible feature of democratic times.”
10. “[People] who live in a democratic society not only seldom indulge in meditation, but they naturally entertain little esteem for it. A democratic state of society . . keeps the greater part of [humanity] in constant activity”

**(Discussion Board will close June 6)**

### **WEEK THREE**

**Discussion Assignment : Read Wiebe’s book *Self Rule* and then, using the Discussion Board comment on the following and then also make three comments on other student comments:**

1. Define American Exceptionalism, what historic forces created this concept that Americans have about themselves?
2. What major historic events brought about the metamorphous in American democracy from in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century?
3. What role did the Progressive Movement and War play in creating modern democracy in America? **Discussion Board will close June 13**

**On Line research Assignment:** Find a report in the *New York Times* on the Progressive Party Convention. Find the platform of the convention and also the *New York Times* editorial position on the party. Put the results of your research on *Blackboard Discussion* page. **Blackboard will close June 13**

### **WEEK FOUR**

**Using the Discussion Board, comment on the following and also make comments on three other entries**

1. What is the thesis of Hofstadter's book?
2. Name three examples he uses in the book to support his thesis.

**Blackboard will close June 20**

#### **WEEK FIVE**

Using the Discussion Board, comment on the following and then make three comments other student comments. Please base your comments on your reading of Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy and Free Markets in the Twenty- First Century*

1. What do you think are the most important factors contributing to the spread of Democracy in the world?
2. How has the United States contributed to the spread of world democracy in the latter half of the twentieth century?
3. How has the United States impeded the spread of Democracy in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century?

**Blackboard closes June 27**

#### **DATE TBA**

#### **WEEK SIX Final Meeting.**

1. Presentation of Annotated Bibliography
2. Final comments, evaluation.

**Blackboard will close June 27**

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

On Line Sources:

[www.historymatters.gmu.edu](http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu)

[www.americanmemory.gov](http://www.americanmemory.gov).

Accessible through STU Library on line research:

JSTOR

New York Times (Historical )

Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1960)

John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson Symbol for an Age* (New York, 1953)

Edmund Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic* ( New York 1956)

Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (New York, 1967)

Lawrence Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism* (New York, 1988)

Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of Democracy* (New York, 2005)

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York, 1919)

Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change* (New York, 1984)

James MacGregor Burns, *The Vineyard of Liberty* (New York, 1981)

Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York , 1966)