

## DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA & CIVIL SOCIETY

Institute for Humane Studies

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Edited by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

**Reader Abstract:** This reader selects excerpts from *Democracy in America* that relate to four major themes: the matter of equality and freedom, culture, social relations, and the tension between honor and ambition. The focus is on the people and culture in a democratic society.

### Session 1: Democratic Social State (42 pages)

Volume I

- Introduction, 3-15

Volume I, Part I

- Chapter 2, "On the Point of Departure and Its Importance for the Future of the Anglo-Americans," 27-45.
- Chapter 3, "Social State of the Anglo-Americans," 45-53.

**Session Abstract:** These readings help to establish the social context in which Tocqueville is writing his book, in particular the way that estates are divided in the United States in contrast to the tradition of primogeniture in Europe. These readings also highlight Tocqueville's perception of the cultural and religious differences among Anglo-Americans.

### Session 2: The Democratic Mind (44 pages)

Volume II, Part I

- Chapter 1, "On the Philosophic Method of the Americans," 403-07.
- Chapter 2, "On the Principal Source of Beliefs among Democratic Peoples," 407-10.
- Chapter 9, "How the Example of the Americans Does Not Prove That a Democratic People Can Have No Aptitude and Taste for the Sciences, Literature, and the Arts," 428-33.
- Chapter 11, "In What Sprit the Americans Cultivate the Arts," 439-43.
- Chapter 12, "Why the Americans at the Same Time Raise Such Little and Such Great Monuments," 443-44.
- Chapter 13, "The Literary Face of Democratic Centuries," 445-49.
- Chapter 14, "On the Literary Industry," 450.
- Chapter 16, "How American Democracy Has Modified the English Language," 452-58.
- Chapter 17, "On Some Sources of Poetry in Democratic Nations," 458-63.

- Chapter 18, “Why American Writers and Orators Are Often Bombastic,” 463-64.
- Chapter 19, “Some Observations on the Theater of Democratic Peoples,” 465-69.
- Chapter 20, “On Some Tendencies Particular to Historians in Democratic Centuries,” 469-72.

**Session Abstract:** The focus in this session is the way that the democratic culture of the United States affects the arts and humanities. Throughout the readings, Tocqueville compares the American approach to philosophy, literature, theater, and history to that of Europe.

### **Session 3: The Democratic Household (33 pages)**

Volume II, Part III

- Chapter 1, “How Mores Become Milder as Conditions are Equalized,” 535-39.
- Chapter 2, “How Democracy Renders the Habitual Relations of the Americans Simpler and Easier,” 539-41.
- Chapter 5, “How Democracy Modifies the Relations of Servant and Master,” 546-53.
- Chapter 8, “Influence of Democracy on the Family,” 558-63.
- Chapter 9, “Education of Girls in the United States,” 563-65.
- Chapter 10, “How the Girl is Found beneath the Features of the Wife,” 565-67.
- Chapter 11, “How Equality of Conditions contributes to Maintaining Good Mores in America,” 567-73.
- Chapter 12, “How the Americans Understand the Equality of Man and Woman,” 573-76.
- Chapter 13, “How Equality Naturally Divides the Americans into a Multitude of Particular Little Societies,” 577-78.

**Session Abstract:** In these readings, Tocqueville discusses the social relations he observes in the United States in contrast with those of Europe. In particular, he discusses the master/servant hierarchy, highlighting the distinction between a wage-laborer and a serf and their respective interactions with their employers or landlords. The other readings deal with the differences in the male-female division between the two cultures.

### **Session 4: The Democratic Honor and Ambition, and Democracy at War (37 pages)**

Volume II, Part III

- Chapter 18, “On Honor in the United States and in Democratic Societies,” 589-99.

- Chapter 19, “Why One Finds So Many Ambitious Men in the United States and So Few Great Ambitions,” 599-604.
- Chapter 20, “On the Industry in Place-Hunting in Certain Democratic Nations,” 604-606.
- Chapter 22, “Why Democratic Peoples Naturally Desire Peace and Democratic Armies Naturally [Desire] War,” 617-22.
- Chapter 23, “Which Is the Most Warlike and the Most Revolutionary Class in Democratic Armies,” 623-25.
- Chapter 24, “What Makes Democratic Armies Weaker than Other Armies When Entering into a Campaign and More Formidable When War Is Prolonged,” 626-29.
- Chapter 25, “On Discipline in Democratic Armies,” 629-30.
- Chapter 26, “Some Considerations on War in Democratic Societies,” 631-35.

**Session Abstract:** These readings deal with two culture themes, honor and ambition, and the differences between the United States and Europe in the way the democratic culture cultivates these two motivations for human behavior. The final few chapters relate to the influence democracy has on the military, as an extension of the themes of honor and ambition.