

## **Voluntary Associations & Democracy**

Georgetown University

PPOL 310 – 11 and 60

Professor R. Boyd

### *Course Goals:*

This course explores the economic, political, and moral functions of voluntary associations in a liberal democracy. Through the careful reading of a variety of sources, canonical as well as contemporary, drawn from political theory, history, and political science, we will focus on the following questions: What is the appropriate role of voluntary associations in a free society? Do voluntary associations ever threaten liberal democracy, and if so, how can we minimize their dangers? Are voluntary associations valuable for their own sake—as expressions of the natural desires of individuals to associate freely—or mainly for their functional importance in making democracy work? Which of their functions (sociological, political, religious, economic, charitable, etc.) is most crucial? How has the standing of voluntary associations changed since the time of Alexis de Tocqueville, and what are the likely causes of the alleged decline of American associational life? How (if at all) can a rich and vibrant associational life be regenerated? The format of the course is interactive, centered on course lectures with student reactions and discussion. Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (available for purchase at the University Bookstore) will be our core text, supplemented by short articles and excerpts available through the Library's online course reserve.

*Reading Assignments: (Dates listed for Section 11 first and Section 60 second)*

### **June 8/July 6: Course Introduction**

No assigned readings

### **June 9/July 7: Classical Liberal Views of Voluntary Associations**

F. A. Hayek, "Individualism: True and False,"  
John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, selections  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Bk. 2

### **June 11/July 9: Voluntary Associations in Early America**

James Madison, *Federalist* #10  
Alien and Sedition Acts  
"Speech of George Washington in Congress," November 19, 1794  
Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to James Madison," December 28, 1794  
James Madison, "Speech in Congress on 'Self-Created Societies,'" February 27, 1794

### **June 15/July 13: Association and Civic Life in Tocqueville's America**

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, "Author's Introduction," Bk. 1, Chs. 2-5, 10.

**June 16/14: Public Opinion, Democratic Despotism, and Civic Mediation**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Bk. 1, Chs. 11-12, 15-17.

**June 18/July 16: Religion as a Voluntary Association**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Bk. 1, Chs. 5-14.

**June 22/July 20: Tocqueville Conclusion/ In-Class Midterm**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Bk. 2, Chs. 1-15; Bk. 4, Chs. 1-8.

**June 23/July 21: Fraternal Organizations, Charity, and Private Welfare Assistance**

David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967*, Chapter 1.

**June 25/July 23: The Decline of Civic Voluntarism and Social Capital**

Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," pp. 65-78.  
Francis Fukuyama, *Trust*, selections.  
Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley, "Civil Society and Social Capital Beyond Putnam," pp. 124-140.

**June 29/July 27: Reinventing Civil Society in America?**

Jean Elshtain et. al., "Council on Civil Society," *A Call to Civil Society: Why America Needs Moral Truths*.  
Benjamin Barber, *A Place for Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong*, Ch. 2.  
Nancy Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: Personal Uses of Pluralism in America*, selections.

**June 30/July 28: Review and Conclusion: Final Papers due in class.**

*Course Requirements for PPOL 310*

- 1) Attendance and active participation are expected at all class meetings.
- 2) In-class blue book midterm on first half of the course (review sheet distributed in advance)—50%
- 3) 6-8 page final analytical paper on your choice from a set of assigned topics—50%

While there is no formal grade for attendance and class participation, students who regularly distinguish themselves by the quality of their contributions to discussions may expect to receive the higher of two grades when they find themselves midway between, say, an A- and an A, or a B+ and an A-.