

# **Voluntary Associations & Democracy**

Georgetown University

PPOL 310-11

Professor R. Boyd

OH: ICC 674, R 2-4PM and by appointment

## *Course Goals:*

This course explores the economic, political, and moral functions of voluntary associations in a democracy. Through the careful reading of a variety of sources, canonical as well as contemporary, drawn from political theory, history, law, 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 chapters to be distributed by email.

## *Reading Assignments:*

### **June 7: Course Introduction**

Introduction; No assigned readings

### **June 8: Liberal and Republican 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 10: \*No Class\***

### **June 14: 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: Association and Civic Life in Tocqueville's America**

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

**June 17: Public Opinion, Democratic Despotism, and Civic Mediation**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, Chs. 3-4, 6-9.

**June 21: Religion as a Voluntary Association**

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

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

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

**June 24: Fraternal Organizations, Charity, and Private Welfare Assistance**

David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967*, pp. 1-62.

**June 28: The Decline of Civic Voluntarism and Social Capital**

Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," pp. 65-78.  
Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley, "The Paradox of Civil Society: A Critique of Putnam," pp. 124-140.

**June 29: American Constitutionalism and the Right to Belong?**

Lon Fuller, "Two Principles of Human Association," pp. 67-85.  
George Kateb, "The Value of Association," pp. 35-63.

**July 5th: Take-home exams due by 4PM in my mailbox, Dept. of Government, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor ICC.**

*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 take-home exam (questions distributed 1 week in advance)—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-.