



Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836

# THE AGE OF JEFFERSON AND JACKSON

## History 3740      Fall 2006

M W F    2:30 - 3:20 pm

**Professor Daniel J. McInerney**

Office: Main 323    Office phone: 797.1283

E-mail: [danielj@hass.usu.edu](mailto:danielj@hass.usu.edu)

*(please state a specific "Subject" when e-mailing)*

Office hours: M W F 10:45-11:45 am

(other times by appointment)

~~~ COURSE GOALS ~~~

The course examines the years 1800 to 1848, from Thomas Jefferson's self-proclaimed "revolution" in American politics through the Mexican War. From the title of the course, you might imagine the focus rests on national politics. Issues such as party development, electoral contests, legislative battles, and Court decisions play an important--but not exclusive--role in the course. I also examine critical events in American social, economic, and cultural history within this period.

On all topics I will offer a dual perspective: an "outer" historical view (that is chronological, descriptive, and evaluative in nature) and an "inner" examination (that analyzes the ideas, values, anxieties, and expectations of the historical players themselves). In other words, I will explore two questions: how we understand these individuals and how they understood themselves.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ENROLL IN THIS COURSE?

Please note that the course is NOT for undergraduates in general. There is a specific focus to the work and the level of expectations. Lectures, readings, and exercises are designed for JUNIOR and SENIOR HISTORY MAJORS who:

- have taken HIST 2700 or 2710 (or USU 1300) and have a sufficient general background in American history,
- have university-level experience with critical historical thinking,
- are prepared for advanced reading and writing assignments, and
- have taken ENGL 2010.

In other words, this is not a course for beginners in university-level historical studies. It is not a course for those who need remedial help in history, reading, or writing. It is a course for those with considerable familiarity in U.S. history who can explore events from multiple perspectives, carry out complex, critical analyses of primary and secondary sources, and write clearly and effectively on both exams and papers.

What does that mean in practical terms? The ONLY students who should register for this course are those who:

- are History majors
- have already taken a university-level American history survey course;
- do not need a “refresher” course on the basics of the Revolution and Constitution;
- can tackle reading assignments on their own, without lectures or guidance from me;
- have an experienced, disciplined, and sophisticated understanding of university-level writing assignments and essay exams;
- know how to handle a complex writing assignment in advanced critical thinking;
- understand completely the University’s codes on plagiarism and academic honesty

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

I expect students to abide by the policies on academic honesty outlined on page 110 of the Fall '06 *Schedule of Classes*. Review this statement of University policy on cheating, falsification, and plagiarism.

In addition, you are **REQUIRED** to understand the nature of plagiarism in all its forms. Carefully read the following web site for a primer on plagiarism:

**[www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html)**

**SPECIAL NOTE:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, class material can be made available in braille, large print, and audio format upon request.

## REQUIRED BOOKS (purchase these editions)

Joseph J. Ellis. *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*.

New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

John Mack Faragher. *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence.

Edited by J. P. Mayer. New York: Perennial Classics (HarperCollins), 2000.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

**Components of final grade:** Three exercises provide the basis for your grade:

1. Mid-term exam, covering lectures and Ellis:.....**30%** of final grade
2. Critical comparative essay on Tocqueville:.....**40%** of final grade
3. Final exam, covering second half of lectures and Faragher:.....**30%** of final grade

Incompletes: An "I" is given only for special, extenuating circumstances, NOT for poor performance. Please refer to University and student handbooks.

### **Key dates for course activities:**

- Midterm exam: Wednesday, October 4
- Due date for paper: Monday, October 30
- Final exam: Monday, December 11 (1:30 pm)

**Readings:** I do not use a textbook in this class. I assume students have already taken the American history survey and used a text in that class. I also assume you have enrolled in an upper-division course, in part, to move beyond textbook accounts of the past. I will frequently distribute maps, tables, and outlines that provide much of the factual material a text would supply. If you feel a bit lost at times about the general context of events covered in the course, let me know. I will loan you a good text that provides a reliable overview of the period.

Assigned readings represent part of the *independent* work you will do in the class. Assignments are meant to display your own ability to understand, organize, and analyze arguments. I do not have formal lectures scheduled for the books in this course, and I do not announce day-to-day reading assignments. This syllabus provides reading guides and identifies due dates. You take it from there. But feel free to speak with me about the assigned works whenever a problem or question arises.

**Exams:** Tests are all-essay.

- Mid-term: Wednesday, October 4 (covers 1<sup>st</sup> half of lectures + Ellis)
- Final: Monday, December 11 (1:30 pm) (covers 2<sup>d</sup> half of lectures + Faragher)

(Do not plan to leave for winter break any earlier than this date; *NO* alternative times.)

Policy on make-up exams: you must have an urgent and compelling *medical* reason for missing a scheduled test; and you must provide a physician's written documentation of the problem. You must see me immediately about this absence, providing verification of the reason for your absence. Expect the make-up test to be more difficult than regularly scheduled exams. There will be ONE day and ONE time period for make-ups at the end of the semester: Saturday, December 2, 9:00-9:50 am.

**Critical essay:** See pages 7-10 for information about this essay (40% of the grade).

**Attendance:** Make an informed decision about class attendance. Regular attendance allows you to follow the content and context of lecture material as well as helping you develop listening and note-taking skills. Regular attendance also demonstrates that you have made an effort in the class, something I bear in mind at the end of the semester, especially for those with a borderline average. No one will be penalized for poor attendance, but the infrequent classroom visitor should not count on any special consideration at grade time. **I do not provide notes for those who miss class.**

### Reading guide for Ellis, *American Sphinx*

The title of Ellis's book provides two important clues about the study:

- First, Ellis is intrigued by the elusive, paradoxical, contradictory, and complex qualities of Jefferson—his sphinx-like quality.
- Second, the author does not focus primarily on “The Politics of Thomas Jefferson” or “The Policies of Thomas Jefferson” or “The Peccadilloes of Thomas Jefferson—but instead on “The Character of Thomas Jefferson.” Ellis’s interest rests on “the animating principles that informed [Jefferson's] public and private life, . . . the core of his convictions and apprehensions” (xvii; emphasis added).

It is an interesting combination of ideas in the book's title: Jefferson's mystery & Jefferson's consistency. Ellis touches on *both* themes and, equally important, examines the relationship between the two. But the argument is very subtle, precise, and sophisticated, so read the book with care and attention.

As you read through the work, focus on the following key issues:

- In Ellis's view, what was the basis and nature of Jefferson's enigmatic character?
- What were the principle components of Jefferson's sphinx-like character?
- How does the author *explain* Jefferson's enigmatic character?  
(Was Jefferson simply a fool or a dolt? Was Jefferson a master deceiver or a hypocrite? If not, what accounts for Jefferson's behavior and style —again, according to Ellis. Consider, for example, the discussions of Jefferson's “psychological agility.”)
- While Ellis emphasizes the “enigmatic” quality of Jefferson's beliefs, what other terms does the author use to describe the *style* of Jefferson's thought? Explain his meaning.
- According to Ellis, what were the “bedrock Jeffersonian values,” the convictions which Jefferson held consistently from the 1770s till his death in 1826?
- Following Ellis's analysis, how did Jefferson conceive of:
 

|                                                                         |                       |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| -history                                                                | -nature               | -women     |
| -the Revolution                                                         | -the Constitution     | -slavery   |
| -religion                                                               | -political leadership | -diplomacy |
| -the individual and the individual's relation to society and government |                       |            |
- According to Ellis, what aspects of the Jeffersonian legacy have passed into oblivion?  
According to Ellis, what particular sets of Jeffersonian ideas continue to have considerable bearing on contemporary life?
- According to Ellis, *why* have so many different (and, often, opposing) groups latched on to the Jeffersonian legacy?

NOTE: As with other reading assignments for the course, Ellis's book forms part of the *independent* study in the class. There will be no formal lectures on *American Sphinx*, although class material will touch on a number of topics that Ellis raises. You will be tested on the book as part of the midterm exam (where you will demonstrate your familiarity with Ellis's understanding of

Jefferson). If you have any concern or question about the book, please feel free to see me.

### **Reading guide for Faragher, *Sugar Creek***

Faragher offers a wonderful evocation and analysis of pioneer life in his study of the Sugar Creek community of central Illinois over the first six decades of the nineteenth century. The richness of the work derives in great part from the many points of view Faragher adopts: he examines prairie settlement in terms of individual experience, community development, and national trends, from the perspectives of men and women, Americans and Indians, rich and poor, original pioneers and later generations. In the process, Faragher touches on social, economic, political, and intellectual approaches to history. His graceful synthesis of methods and viewpoints allows the study to operate on many levels. I think you will find the story engaging and rewarding.

It's also a good read. In fact, Faragher writes so well--and records so many interesting details of everyday life--that readers might gloss over the complex themes he subtly raises. Don't let down your guard. Read closely and critically, paying particular attention to Faragher's introductory comments which set up the framework of his argument.

Focus attention on the following issues raised throughout the book:

- Sugar Creek's sources of community and cooperation (in what many Americans perceive as a ruggedly individualistic world)
- the interplay of change and continuity, transience and permanence, innovation and tradition in Sugar Creek life (in a world where we might think nothing was permanent)
- the creation of a distinctive (and changing) landscape (in an environment we might assume was pre-arranged and pre-determined)
- the interplay of family life and economic life (of personal relations and productive relations), particularly with respect to women (rather than viewing these social and market forces as separate and independent)

NOTE: As with other reading assignments for the course, Faragher's book forms part of the *independent* study in the class. There will be no formal lectures on *Sugar Creek*, although class material will touch on a number of topics that Faragher raises. You will be tested on the book as part of the final exam (where you will demonstrate your familiarity with Faragher's understanding of the frontier experience). If you have any concern or question about the book, please feel free to see me.

### Three-part evaluation scale for MIDTERM EXAM & FINAL EXAM

**ACCURACY** of information (material provided in the essay is correct, verifiable, and precise; the response is directly related to--and covers--the central issues in the question; proper chronological sequence of events) **25%**

|     | A     | B     | C     | D | F   |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|---|-----|-------|
| I.  | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11-10 | 9 | 8-0 | _____ |
| II. | 10-9  | 8     | 7     | 6 | 5-0 | _____ |

**CLARITY** of information (logical sequence of information; well-organized; clear, straightforward sentences and paragraphs; essay conforms to rules of sentence and paragraph construction, grammar, and spelling) **25%**

|     | A     | B     | C     | D | F   |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|---|-----|-------|
| I.  | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11-10 | 9 | 8-0 | _____ |
| II. | 10-9  | 8     | 7     | 6 | 5-0 | _____ |

**SUFFICIENCY** of information (satisfactory and sufficient explanation of the problem under review; essay defines and explores key terms / concepts / issues/ideas; essay reflects the complexity and depth of the material under review; essay answers the "why" and "because" questions) **50%**

|     | A     | B     | C     | D     | F    |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| I.  | 30-27 | 26-24 | 23-21 | 20-18 | 17-0 | _____ |
| II. | 20-18 | 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11-0 | _____ |

| A      | B     | C     | D     | F    | TOTAL |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| 100-90 | 89-80 | 79-70 | 69-60 | 59-0 | _____ |

Remember that your paper will lose points for problems such as:

- |                                                                                                    |                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| -factual, chronological errors                                                                     | -incorrect statements                                                        |
| -omission of key information                                                                       | -omission of key explanations                                                |
| -vagueness in answers                                                                              | -wandering away from question                                                |
| -poor organization                                                                                 | -writing an outline rather than an essay                                     |
| -confusing or contradictory arguments                                                              | -creating an essay that <i>raises</i> more questions than it answers         |
| -severe grammatical and spelling errors that prevent a reader from making sense of your statements | -mentioning (but not defining and explaining) key issues/terms/beliefs/ideas |

## CRITICAL ESSAY

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence. Edited by J. P. Mayer. New York: Perennial Classics (HarperCollins), 2000.

**Write on ONE of the following questions:**

**Question 1: Discuss the reasons for Tocqueville's interest in America.**

- Why was Tocqueville so intrigued with the story of America?
- Considering the relative youth and inexperience of the nation, what bearing could America's experience possibly have on the older, settled, traditional nations of Europe?
- To Tocqueville's mind, what clearly separated the American experience from the experience of Europeans?
- As best Tocqueville could forecast, what did the future seem to hold concerning America's power and influence?

**Question 2: Discuss Tocqueville's understanding of society and politics.**

According to Tocqueville, what are the central characteristics of American society?

According to Tocqueville, what are the central characteristics of American politics?

What is the relationship between American society and American politics?

-Does one determine the other? Is one "primary" and the other "derivative," one a cause of events and the other an *effect*?

-Or, are society and politics mutually determinative, existing in a dialectical relationship?

-Or, are they essentially the same phenomenon?

(Note: Tocqueville is clear on these matters--he has an answer)

For Tocqueville, what difference do the answers to these questions make for American life--and for the possible fate of humanity?

**Question 3: Consider Tocqueville as a philosopher of history.**

What theory of history does he present in his book? For example: what does he assume about the dynamics and processes of history?; how does history proceed?; does it have a direction?; if so, where is it leading and why?; how should humanity respond to the dynamics and processes of history?; what does all of this have to do with democracy in America?

**Question 4: Compare and contrast Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to Charles Dickens's *American Notes*, published in 1842, focusing on the authors':**

-purposes

-underlying themes

-informing assumptions

-methods

-bases of "evidence"

-conclusions

NOTE: This is NOT a "book report." You will not simply summarize the contents of the book. Don't even bother handing in a paper like that. Instead, you are going to critically examine the work. You will analyze the ways in which the author constructs the components and logic of his argument (his theses, his informing assumptions, the interpretation he applies to events, the propositions he demonstrates).

It is a sophisticated exercise and not one that can be done quickly. The due date is October 30<sup>th</sup>. But you will need a considerable amount of time to read, scrutinize, reflect, and comment on the book. Do not do a "rush job." That will show up in the quality of your writing—and the grade you receive.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Approach:** Your topic must be explored from the perspective of Tocqueville's work. This is the source to study in thinking about the topic. Question 4, of course, also focuses on a second book.

Draw upon information in Volume One to answer the question. Read the entire volume and read it broadly. If you start out by focusing exclusively on the *apparent* limits of a question, you are likely to miss the wider implications and meanings Tocqueville intended.

You may draw upon material in Volume Two, but the extra reading is not required.

**Due date:** Monday, October 30, 2:30 pm, in class.

### Penalties for late submission:

|                                                             |                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| -Papers submitted from 2:31pm to 4:30 pm Monday:            | penalized 1 full letter grade  |
| -Papers submitted from 4:31 pm Monday – 4:30 pm Tuesday:    | penalized 2 full letter grades |
| -Papers submitted from 4:31 pm Tuesday – 4:30 pm Wednesday: | penalized 3 full letter grades |
| -Papers submitted from 4:31pm Wednesday – 4:30pm Thursday:  | penalized 4 full letter grades |

**Length:** 7-8 pages (1 page = 250 words)

**Appearance:** Print out your paper using a 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Submit a clean, proofread copy of your work, not one filled with corrections.

**An important stylistic note:** The paper's focus rests on Tocqueville--not on you. Do not use the words "I," "me," "my," "mine" (or "we," "us") in the paper. You will lose two points every time these words appear in your paper.

**Organization:** observe the following required format:

*a. First two paragraphs (1 page maximum)*

-In your opening paragraph, do not simply restate the question. Instead provide a succinct statement of your informing thesis, indicating the interpretive approach you will take with the question.

-In the second paragraph, preview the organization of your argument. State clearly and precisely how your argument will proceed. For example: state the key components of your argument; the steps your essay will take in responding to the question; and the reasons why your chosen approach is appropriate to the material. In other words, let the reader know in advance the direction(s) your essay will take.

*b. Main body (4-5 pages)*

-In the body of the essay, *analyze* the material from Tocqueville. DO NOT simply label positions or summarize the contents of the book.

*c. Conclusion (1 page maximum)*

-In your final paragraph, summarize the interpretive approach you have taken to the question **and** consider the larger significance of the position you have taken.

**Citations:** Use the Harper Perennial Classics edition. You must cite your source:

- (1) when making a direct quotation, **AND**
- (2) when making general reference to a part of a work.

When quoting/paraphrasing, follow a simple citation scheme: (PART, CHAPTER: PAGE)

-Example, after a direct quote:

"There is nothing more terrifying than the vagueness of American laws when they are defining political crimes properly so called" (I, 7:109).

-Example, after a paraphrase:

Tocqueville applauded the freedom of political discussion in America, but he recognized that the debate could at times challenge the very idea of Union (II, 4:191-93, 10:389-92).

Note: Use direct quotations *sparingly*. When used, make the quotations brief, accurate, and pertinent. EXPLAIN their significance. Do not pad your essay with excessive quotes.

**Plagiarism:** I want your *own* analysis of Tocqueville's thoughts, not the analysis of others. Stick with *Democracy in America*; I neither require nor recommend reference to other works. ANY evidence of plagiarism (the unacknowledged use of another's words and/or ideas) will result in automatic failure. You are REQUIRED to read the following website for information on plagiarism:

**[www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html)**

If you have any questions about the nature of plagiarism, talk with me before submitting your paper.

**Grading:** See the evaluation grid on the next page.

**Key reminders:**

1. Keep in mind that the so-called "true" historical record is not at stake in this essay. *Tocqueville's* reading of the world rests at the center of discussion. Answer the question solely from *his* point of view (in question 4, his and Dickens's). Think of yourself as a reporter; your assignment is to cover Tocqueville's interpretation of a particular set of issues. Keep your focus on his perspective at all times.
2. Critical historical analysis requires evidence. You must back up statements made in the essay with proof. And, you must cite all claims made in the paper. What is the "evidence," the "proof"? Tocqueville's assertions. What is a proper citation? See the comments at the top of this page.
3. Quotations and paraphrases are rarely self-evident and self-explanatory. DISCUSS the meaning of the words to which you call attention.
4. Clarify how TOCQUEVILLE defines key terms in his book.
5. Organize your argument. Do not submit a series of disconnected statements and observations. A good essay is not simply a *collection* of information; it is an *arrangement* of information. There must be an overarching structure to the argument *and* a logical progression of points. What is a good way to achieve these goals? Start by sketching out the components of your argument on index cards. Then, arrange the cards in an appropriate and logical order. Use them as an organizational "take-off" point for your essay.
6. One final recommendation: compose the opening paragraphs of your essay last, not first. They will be much clearer and more meaningful.

### Six-part evaluation scale for Tocqueville essay

1. **First two paragraphs** (clear, meaningful, concise overviews of the thesis and of the essay's direction)

|       |       |    |      |     |       |
|-------|-------|----|------|-----|-------|
| A     | B     | C  | D    | F   |       |
| 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-9 | 8-0 | _____ |

2. Paper focuses on **critical analysis** of the book (not a mere summary of contents)

|       |       |       |    |      |       |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|-------|
| A     | B     | C     | D  | F    |       |
| 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-0 | _____ |

3. **Well-reasoned** critiques of the book (fair, logical, accurate, and persuasive assessments; key terms defined; defensible claims; sticks with *Tocqueville's* point of view; clarifies Tocqueville's informing assumptions)

|       |       |       |    |      |       |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|-------|
| A     | B     | C     | D  | F    |       |
| 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-0 | _____ |

4. **Well-substantiated** critiques of the book; **all** claims backed up by evidence (i.e, by proper citations)

|       |       |       |    |      |       |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|-------|
| A     | B     | C     | D  | F    |       |
| 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-0 | _____ |

5. **Well-organized** response (clear framework for analyzing the book; logical sequence of points in your argument)

|       |       |       |    |      |       |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|-------|
| A     | B     | C     | D  | F    |       |
| 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-0 | _____ |

6. **Mechanics** of the paper (spelling; punctuation; sentence and paragraph construction)

|       |       |       |    |      |       |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|-------|
| A     | B     | C     | D  | F    |       |
| 17-16 | 15-14 | 13-12 | 11 | 10-0 | _____ |

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

|        |       |       |       |      |  |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|--|
| A      | B     | C     | D     | F    |  |
| 100-90 | 89-80 | 79-70 | 69-60 | 59-0 |  |

Remember that your paper will lose points for problems such as:

- |                                                                        |                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| -contradictory arguments                                               | -poor organization                       |
| -belaboring the obvious                                                | -excessive quotation                     |
| -unfair or irrelevant criticisms                                       | -lack of citations                       |
| -failing to define key terms and concepts                              | -poor grammar, spelling, and punctuation |
| -passing off another's ideas as your own                               |                                          |
| -merely summarizing the book's contents rather than analyzing the book |                                          |