

Tocqueville's Democracy in America

Explore the challenges of equality

OVERVIEW	
Period	Spring term 2025
Data	January 30 - May 29 2025 Every Thursday 14.00 - 16.00 16 weeks of class - 2 hours per week No class on February 6 and March 27 (vacation)
Location	Rapenburg 6, Leiden
Language	English / Dutch
Cost	€2.195 per semester <i>There are various foundations providing scholarships for students. Many students already attended via a scholarship.</i>
Teacher	Dr. Melvin Schut
Dean	Gerard Versluis
Email	aanmeldingen@pascalinstituut.nl

Course description

Alexis de Tocqueville lived during the aftermath of the French Revolution, when France transitioned from aristocracy to democracy. He is widely regarded as one of the most important thinkers on modern democracy. What are the advantages and disadvantages brought by the new equality? What, if anything, can be saved from aristocracy? In studying Tocqueville's classic work you will explore themes such as the dangers of majoritarian tyranny, the opportunities for social advancement, and the phenomenon of individualism. You will gain valuable insights into the nature of democracy and the unique social and political problems posed by it.

Study material

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, University of Chicago Press, translation by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. ISBN: 978-0226805368
You will read the entire book cover to cover, proceeding about 50 pages each week.

Admission standards

Advanced students in all fields. Recently graduated or professional: you are very welcome too.

Instruction and examination

All class sessions will be conducted as “seminars,” or Socratic conversations, using the week’s reading as the subject matter. Students are expected to actively participate in the discussion for the duration of each class session.

The use of electronic devices (such as laptops or phones) is not allowed during this course, in order to improve concentration and the quality of conversation.

Students will be required to submit weekly questions in response to the reading. Examination will further consist of a midterm essay and a final paper.

More specific instructions regarding the examination will be provided after enrollment.

Enrollment

The application period is until January 4th, 2025. You will receive the outcome of your application on January 7th 2025.

