In this course we will discuss the nature of citizenship in a democracy – its character, values and obligations. Focusing primarily on the American example, we will ask questions such as: Do citizens in a democracy differ from citizens in other regimes? Does democratic citizenship produce unique obligations toward the government (or toward the world at large)? Do democratic citizens require special democratic virtues, or a special set of shared beliefs, in order to fulfill their obligations? These and related questions will be explored by studying mainly (but not exclusively) American texts by classic authors such as James Madison, Henry Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Henry Adams, and John Dewey, and contemporary philosophers, social scientists, and political observers such as Richard Rorty, Patrick Deneen, and Kathy Roth-Douquet.

**Course Texts**

Links to the following texts can be found on the class Blackboard page (the Thoreau, Coats and Tocqueville material are electronic copies). I have made these public domain texts available here to save you some money. For those of you who would like to have a book in your hand when reading these works: many of these can be easily found in used bookstores, and they can all be found at Amazon. If enough of you would like hard copies, I can also request that the UVM bookstore order the number of copies we need.

- **Plato, The Apology**
- **James Madison, Federalist 10**
- **Henry Adams, Democracy**
- **Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience**
- **Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave**
- **Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”**
- Selections from Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, are also available as a file on Blackboard.

The following texts are available for purchase at the UVM bookstore.

- **Danielle Allen, Our Declaration**
- **John Dewey, A Common Faith**
- **Richard Rorty, Achieving Our Country**
- **Jason Brennan, Against Democracy**
- **Patrick Deneen, Why Liberalism Failed**
- **Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer, AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes from Military Service and How it Hurts Our Country**
- **Timothy Snyder, On Tyranny**

**Course Requirements**

Students are expected to attend every class and have the week’s reading prepared at the beginning of each week (for Tuesday’s class, that is). There will be a (take home) mid-term examination, a final oral presentation in the last weeks of classes, and a cumulative (take home) final examination. Each of these will constitute 25% of your grade. The other 25% will grow from class preparation and participation (see below).
Homework, Class Participation and Oral Presentations

Four skills – reading, writing, research, and speaking – will be emphasized in your work in this course. In order to develop these skills (as well to facilitate thinking about the course material!) you will be expected to:

1. Have the week’s reading prepared at the beginning of the week. This preparation means that you will not only have read the material, but will be prepared to discuss and offer (well informed!) opinions and questions about the material. All students will be expected to participate in class discussions.

2. Prepare weekly homework assignments. These are short weekly essays (less than two typed, double-spaced pages). At the end of this syllabus are writing prompts for each week’s reading.

3. Prepare a semester research project. This will grow out of our course reading, homework assignments, class discussions, and conversations with me outside of class. Each student will be expected to:
   a. Meet with me in my office before February 19 to discuss ideas for this project
   b. Prepare a brief (one page) proposal by February 26
   c. Research the topic, in light of your proposal and our conversations
   d. Present a formal oral report at the end of the semester in which you share your research findings and reflections. More on this later in the semester
   e. Submit a written copy (these will probably run 5-8 typed, double-spaced pages) of your research project no later than two days after your oral presentation
Reading and Course Schedule

Concerns About Democracy

January 15: Snyder, On Tyranny

January 17: Plato, The Apology (Blackboard)

January 22-24: Madison, Federalist 10 (Blackboard)

January 29-31: Adams, Democracy (Blackboard) NOTE: Democracy is a novel; it reads quickly, but make sure to set aside time to read it all.

Democratic Citizens in the American Context

February 5-7: Tocqueville, Democracy in America (Blackboard)

February 12-14: Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (Blackboard)

February 19-21: Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (Blackboard)

February 26-28: Allen, Our Declaration (concentrate, especially, on Prologue, Declaration, Chapters 1-4, 14, 23-31, 40-45, 49, Epilogue)

**NOTE: No class March 5, Town Meeting Day

March 7: Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

**NOTE: Mid-term examination due in class on Thursday, March 7

**NOTE: No classes March 12-14: Spring Recess

March 19-21: Brennan, Against Democracy (concentrate, especially, on Chapters 1-4 and 9)

Democratic Culture and Values

March 26-28: Dewey, A Common Faith

April 2-4: Rorty, Achieving our Country

April 9-11: Deneen, Why Liberalism Failed (concentrate on Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 7, and Conclusion)

Democratic Prospects

April 16-18: Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer, AWOL

Student Presentations

April 23-May 2: Student oral presentations (4 class sessions)

**NOTE: Final Exam due in my office by noon, Friday, May 10 (you are welcome to hand it in earlier if you prefer)
Weekly Homework Prompts

January 22: Madison considers “faction” to be the primary danger of free government. What does he mean by this? Why doesn’t he propose ways of minimizing the formation of factions?

January 29: Does Henry Adams believe that democracy has at least the possibility of becoming a virtuous, admirable form of government?

February 5: Does Tocqueville admire or dislike democratic citizens?

February 12: Was Thoreau a democratic citizen?

February 19: Why was literacy, the ability to read books, so important to Douglass’s conception and experience of freedom? Is reading equally important for your experience of freedom?

February 26: Explain why Allen believes that “ Democracies are built out of language” and that “To succeed as citizens we need to understand this fundamental political fact.” (p. 43)

March 7: Explain what Coates means when he writes, “To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America’s origins in a slavery economy is patriotism a la carte.”

March 19: Why does Brennan believe that democratic engagement is so morally unappealing?

March 26: Explain, in as much detail as space allows, what Dewey means by a “common faith.” How does this relate to more conventional religious faiths?

April 2: Is Rorty right to think that the political left is the only source of civic virtue and progress?

April 9: What does Deneen mean when he argues that liberalism promotes an “anticulture”?

April 16: Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer argue that privileged citizens in the United States are increasingly unlikely to serve in the military. Why do they think this is a threat to our democracy? Do you agree with them?