Political Science 200, section 2: Survey of Political Theory (Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:45)

The tasks of political theory are to understand, and search for answers to, fundamental questions of political life: How should we live, as individuals and as a society? What is justice, and what does it require of us? What is the best form of government? In lecture we will survey the most important thinkers of Western civilization who have tried to answer those questions, but we will focus on four of them. The objectives of the course are for us to understand political ideas and to make prudent political choices in our lives.

Required books ordered for purchase (be sure to obtain these editions, either in print or as e-book, of Machiavelli, Locke, and Plato; any edition of the Second Treatise of Government is acceptable):


Political Science 409Z: Special Topics in Political Theory (Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45)

Topic: Tocqueville on Democracy and Aristocracy

Alexis de Tocqueville, author of the best book on American politics, Democracy in America, could understand his subject because he compared democracy with another form of government, aristocracy. We will follow Tocqueville’s lead by studying democracy and aristocracy in that book and in other writings by him: The Ancien Régime and the Revolution, about the struggle between aristocratic and democratic forces leading to the French Revolution; Tocqueville’s notes for continuing his study of the French Revolution; and Recollections, his private journal of the Revolution of 1848. We should arrive at a better understanding of democratic and nondemocratic political forces in our own time.

Required books ordered for purchase (be sure to obtain these editions, either in print or as e-book):


Both classes count toward the Great Works Academic Certificate. See Professor Fott for more information.