

## Government 492-K

### *The American Political Novel*

Prof. Catherine H. Zuckert  
Decio 350, TH 1-3 p.m. or by appointment

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**Course Description:** Literary works both reflect and reflect on the political regimes in which they are written. In this course we will examine the meaning of basic American political principles—liberty and equality—as they are articulated and re-interpreted in practice in classic works of theory and fiction. In several cases we will also compare the written version of a story with its historical sources and its re-interpretation in film.

**Assigned Texts** (available for purchase in the bookstore)

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Grant ed. (Selections; Hackett Publishing)  
James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*  
Herman Melville, *Bartleby & Benito Cereno*  
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*  
Willa Cather, *O’Pioneers*  
Ernest Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not*  
William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

*Coursepack* with short stories by Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and *U.S. v. Amistad* available in the La Fortune Copy Shop

### Schedule of Classes and Readings

- W-1-16     **Introduction:** What are the fundamental principles of the American regime?  
Why and how is their meaning debated?  
  
Read: *Declaration of Independence* (handout)
- M-1-21     ***The Conditions and Distinctive Character of the Development of Democracy  
in America***  
  
Read: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction, Vol. I, Part I: Ch. 2-4 in  
Grant, ed., Vol. I, Pt. I, Ch. 1 in coursepack
- W-1-23     ***What Difference Did the Revolution Make?***

Read: Rip van Winkle, coursepack

M-1-28 ***Was the Race Problem Soluble? With regard to the natives?***

Read: Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, Ch. 1-8

W-1-30 Read: *Last*, Ch. 9-16.

M-2-4 Read: *Last*, Ch. 17-25

W-2-6 Read: *Last*, Ch. 26-33

M-2-11 Watch video of *Last of the Mohicans*

W-2-13 Read: Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 10

**FIRST PAPER OPPORTUNITY—due 9 a.m., Monday, February 18**

M-2-18 ***The Character and Influence of the Puritan Origins—View 2***

Read: Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown,” coursepack

W-2-20 No class.

M-2-25 ***The Character and Effect of the American Revolution—View 2***

Read: Hawthorne, “My Cousin, Major Molineux,” coursepack

***The Causes and Character of Liberty***

***1. The Problem of Commercial-Industrial Society***

W-2-27 Read: Herman Melville, “Bartley the Scrivener”; Tocqueville, *Democracy*,  
Vol. II, Part II, Ch. 1, 2, 20

**SECOND PAPER OPPORTUNITY—due 9 a.m., Monday, March 4**

***2. The Problem of African-American Slavery***

M-3-4 Read: Melville, “Benito Cereno”

W-3-6 Watch *Amistad* (movie/video) and read the case in the coursepack

**THIRD PAPER OPPORTUNITY—due Monday, March 18, 9 a.m.**

Spring break

***The Rise of the Entrepreneur and the Conquering of the Frontier***

**A. On the River–Tom Sawyer as Potential President**

- M-3-18 Read: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Preface and Ch. 1-11  
Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. II, Part II, Ch. 1-2, 20 recommended
- W-3-20 Read: *Tom Sawyer*, Ch. 12-24
- M-3-25 Read: *Tom Sawyer*, Ch. 25-35 and Conclusion

**B. In the West on the Land–The Woman as Commercial Leader**

- W-3-27 Read: Willa Cather, *O’Pioneers*, Parts I & II
- W-4-3 Read: *O’Pioneers*, Parts III-V;  
Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. II, Part III, Ch. 8-12 (recommended)

**FOURTH PAPER OPPORTUNITY, due Monday, April 8, 9 a.m.**

**C. The Implications of Economic Inequality**

1. The Implications of Economic Inequality for American Democracy

- M-4-8 Read: Ernest Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not*
- W-4-10 Watch: *To Have and Have Not* (Faulkner screenplay)

**2. Slavery Revisited**

- M-4-15 Read: William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*, “Old People” and “The Bear,” 1-4
- W-4-17 Read: “The Bear,” 5 and “Delta Autumn”

**FIFTH PAPER OPPORTUNITY, due Monday, April 22, 9 a.m.**

**3. Race and Class in America**

- M-4-22 Read: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Introduction, Prologue, Ch 1-4
- W-4-24 Read: *IM*, Ch 5-12

M-4-29      Read: *IM*, Ch 13-18

W-5-1      Read: *IM*, Ch. 19-end

**SIXTH PAPER OPPORTUNITY, due Monday, May 6**

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:** The course will be conducted as a seminar. Students will be expected, therefore, to come to class have completed the reading assignment and thought a bit about it. To facilitate both reflection on the reading and discussion in class, each student will be expected to hand in a **paragraph on the reading** assignment for **each class** session. (Everyone is allowed three misses without penalty, no questions asked.) Students will also be required to write **4 papers**, 4-6 pages typed, double-spaced, at 4 of the paper opportunity times. Possible topic sheets will be handed out approximately one week in advance. Students **may** wrote more than 4 papers. In that case, the best 4 grades will count toward their final grade in the course.

**EVALUATION:**

15%    Participation in class discussion and paragraphs

5%    Improvement

20%    Each of the four required papers

M-4-22