I. Background
   A. Personal: 1805-59, nobility, 1831 trip to America, legislator 1839-50
   B. Political context: instability of French politics
      1. French Revolution, 1789; Napoleon in power 1799-1814
      2. Fall of Napoleon, Bourbon restoration
      3. Revolution of 1830: Bourbons deposed, constitutional (July) monarchy
      4. 1848: revolutions across Europe; in France, establishment of Second Republic
      5. 1851: coup by Napoleon III (nephew of Napoleon I), Second Empire

II. Tocqueville’s study of America both sociological and normative
   A. Like Marx, turned away from pure politics to analyze entire social order
   B. View of history: partly determined, ineluctable progress of equality
   C. America as model democratic republic and harbinger of Europe’s future, but has peculiar history
      (no feudalism, no fixed classes, Puritan history)

III. Democratic social conditions and its political consequences
   A. Tocqueville observes democratic social conditions in America
      1. No hereditary ranks and distinctions; wealth circulates “with incredible rapidity”
      2. Equality of mental endowments
   B. Political consequences of democratic social conditions
      1. Equal political rights
      2. Popular sovereignty: representative institutions but the interests of the people direct society

IV. Liberty and local institutions
   A. New England township
   B. Administrative decentralization in America and its effects

V. Associations
   A. Types of associations
   B. Role of associations in politics
   C. Relationship between freedom and associations

VI. Strengths and weaknesses of democratic government
   A. Strengths
      1. Laws tend toward greatest good of the greatest number
         a. Rulers don’t have interests opposed to those of the people
         b. The governed are alert and check representatives from deviating from their interests
      2. Can draw on people’s past experience (including mistakes) in revising laws
      3. People have respect for rights and for the law
   B. Weaknesses
      1. Inefficacy in achieving its ends due to lack of skill and envy among the people
      2. Rulers in democracy are more corruptible than rulers in aristocracy
      3. Legislative and administrative instability
      4. Tyranny of the majority, democratic despotism (“leaves the body alone and goes straight for the soul”)

VII. What can temper tyranny of the majority
   A. Institutions: local self-govt, political and civic associations, judiciary, free press
   B. Mores/Norms: above institutions help foster sense of the common good among the people