

Close Reading Assignment on Alexis de Tocqueville

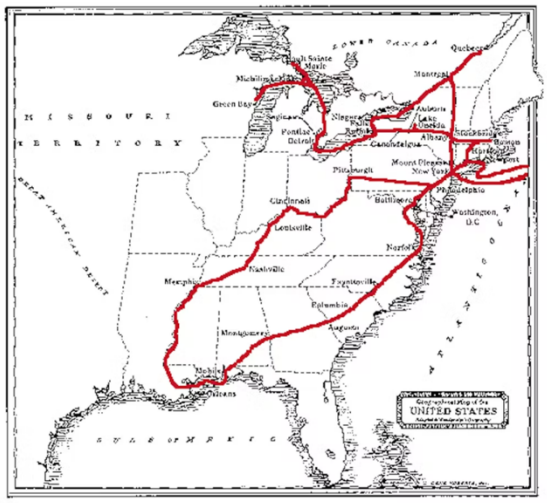
What is a Close Reading?

In this assignment, you will carry out a "close reading" of excerpts from a widely read book about the early years of the United States: *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville. The excerpts are available on Canvas.

A "close reading" means that you carefully read a text in its entirety, writing notes or questions as you come across themes and arguments made by the author, while keeping in mind concepts from our course. I strongly recommend that you do this without distractions. Put away your phone, find a quiet space in your home or here on campus, and focus on what Tocqueville is trying to communicate to his readers.

Context

Tocqueville was a French political figure who visited the U.S. in 1831. He traveled widely (see his route in the map below) and wrote down his observations of our young republic. Remember that France, like the U.S., overthrew a monarchy and began an experiment in democratic rule. Think also about our module on research methods and how we use our sociological imagination to actually "do" sociology.



Instructions

After completing the reading, please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. **Aim for 300 words for each question.** When you're done, proofread to catch typos and misspellings. Feel free to look up words that you don't know. If you have any questions, please reach out via Canvas message, or stop by office hours on Zoom or in my office in GC.

Please remember that I will be running your answers through three AI detectors.

Questions

- As we have discussed in this class, identities matter in terms of how we view the world around us. Think about Tocqueville's identity as a European man of privilege. How might his statuses and roles affect his observations? Use short quotations from the excerpts to support your arguments.
- How would you compare his observations to America today? Use short quotations from the excerpts to support your arguments.