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In the Spirit of Tocqueville

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Alexis de Tocqueville by Theodore Chassereau

FEBRUARY 22, 2012

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JOHN AGRESTO

Former president, St. John's College

MARCH 14, 2012

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HARVEY C. MANSFIELD

William R. Kenan, Jr.,
Professor of Government
Harvard University

APRIL 17, 2012

“Liberal Education
and Political Liberalism”

ANTHONY KRONMAN

Sterling Professor of Law
Yale University

IN THE Spirit OF Tocqueville

FURMAN'S TOCQUEVILLE PROGRAM LECTURE Series brings prominent scholars and public intellectuals to campus to engage the moral questions at the heart of political life.

The program takes its name from Alexis de Tocqueville, perhaps the greatest student of modern democracy, who understood both the difficulty and the necessity of reminding citizens of a decent and prosperous regime about questions of truth, nobility and eternity. These questions are not always comfortable to discuss and are never easily resolved. However, as Tocqueville understood, they cannot be ignored by those who seek to live lives of freedom and dignity.

This spring, the Tocqueville Program (schedule left) is focusing on the theme of “Liberal Education and Liberal Democracy.” From the beginning of the American Republic, the best statesmen and thinkers have seen an essential connection between liberal democracy and liberal education. According to Thomas Jefferson, the extensive educational plan he proposed for his native Virginia was a necessary means for “rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty.”

The rigorous education in politics and history Jefferson envisioned, however, has little relation to what is taught in American universities today. In spite of a price tag that strains the limits of middle-class credulity, universities and colleges often offer curricula with little apparent coherence and seem increasingly incapable of articulating the high and noble purpose of liberal education in a democratic society. Thus the effort to answer the question, “What is liberal education?”

Contact benjamin.storey@furman.edu to learn more about the Tocqueville Program.