

Political Science 472H
Democratic Theory
Fall 2008

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Office hours: Mondays, 9:00-10:30am; Thursdays, 3:15-4:45pm and by appointment

Democratic theory is a large topic and can be approached in many different ways. In this course we will try to come with some answers to this basic but surprisingly difficult question: what is a democracy? We will spend the first part of the course surveying some of the classic theories of democracy; after that we will move to contemporary arguments about democracy. A large part of the course will be devoted to the problems and possible solutions of democratic theory and practice. A primary goal of this course is to gain a better understanding of democracy theory, while secondary goals are to learn to read texts well, write carefully constructed arguments, and to learn to think critically.

Requirements

Reading and Participation

I expect students to do the readings every week and to come prepared to discuss them in class. Make sure you bring the assigned readings with you to class. This class will rise or fall on the shoulders of the students: all students must contribute intelligently to class discussion. I will rarely lecture. If you do not attend class, then you cannot participate, which will be reflected in your grade. Class participation is worth 10% of the grade.

Quizzes and Exams

There will be one quiz, one midterm and one final. The midterm and final will be cumulative. All quizzes and exams will include short questions that will each ask you to explain one aspect about a particular reading; the final and possibly the midterm will also have longer questions that may ask you to discuss two readings in tandem with each other. The quiz is worth 5% of the grade; the midterm is 15%; the final is 20%. All exams can be taken on your laptop with secure-exam.

Writings Assignments

Interviews:

You will interview three non-student voters before the election at least three times each; you will analyze these interviews in a four to five page paper. The first interview must be completed September 4th; the second by October 2nd; and the third by October 21st. The interviews and paper are worth 15% of your grade. You will need to give me a short synopsis of each interview shortly after they are conducted.

Very Short Papers: You will write two papers, two pages each, on the day's reading over the first few weeks of the semester. You must email me the paper schedule you prefer (see below) by 2pm on August 22nd. You may not change your schedule once you choose it. Each short paper is 5% of your grade.

Final Paper: There will be one 10 to 12 page paper on a topic of your choosing, though I will suggest some topics. You will need to meet with me to discuss your topic, and you will need to hand in a draft of at least four pages before the paper is due. I will hand out a full schedule later in the semester. The final paper is worth 25% of your grade.

Grading Scale

All grades will be given on a scale of 0 to 100, with each ten points (between 60 and 100) representing a full grade (100-90=A+ to A-, 89-80=B+ to B-, and so on).

E-Mail Policy

I sign on to email during the week, but only occasionally on the weekend. Do not expect me to reply to your email immediately, though I will respond within 24 hours during the week, and often quicker than that. I use email for questions that can be answered briefly; I do not use email to get into extended discussions. If you need to discuss a paper, an exam, or a course reading (or something else), please come see me during my office hours or make an appointment to see me. Email is an excellent way to make an appointment with me.

Readings

The following books have been ordered for class. Try to get the right edition of each book.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Penguin)

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford)

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago)

Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (Transaction)

Madison, et. al, *Federalist Papers* (Penguin)

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard)

Readings marked (BB) can be found through the external link on the Blackboard site for this course.

Readings marked (ER) can be found through electronic reserves.

Short Paper Schedule

1. August 28, September 18

2. September 2, September 23

3. September 4, September 25

Be sure to email the number of the schedule you want by August 22nd, 2pm.

Class Schedule

(The schedule is tentative and I may make changes as the semester progresses.)

Foundations

- 8/19 Introduction
- 8/21 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book 1 and Book 2, chs. 1-6
- 8/26 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, finish Book 2
- 8/28 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book 3 and Book 4, chs. 1-2, 7-8
- 9/2 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 1-3
- 9/4 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 4-6; (First interview completed)
- 9/9 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 7-8, 10
- 9/11 Quiz
- 9/16 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 11, 12, 16
- 9/18 Federalist Papers, #1, 9, 10, 35, 37, 39
- 9/23 Federalist Papers, #47-51, 78; The Letter of Brutus, nos. 1-4 (BB)
- 9/25 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 1-4, 9, 11-14,
- 9/30 Rosh Hashana Holiday, no class
- 10/2 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 17, 20, 22-25, 29, 63-4 (Second interview completed)
- 10/7 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 65-66; Cohen "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy" (ER)
- 10/9 Midterm
- 10/14 Fall Break
- 10/16 Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy" (ER)
- 10/21 Sanders, "Against Deliberation" (BB); Schudson, Why Conversation Is Not the Soul of Democracy (BB); (Third interview completed)

Criticisms and Complexities

- 10/23 Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, part 4 (chs 20-3) (ER)
- 10/28 Interview Paper due
- 10/30 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*
- 11/4 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*
- 11/6 Individual meetings about final paper
- 11/11 Roemer, *Equal Opportunity*, 1-24 (ER)
- 11/13 Phillips, "'Really' Equal: Opportunities and Autonomy" (BB)
- 11/18 Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron" (BB); Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, part one
- 11/20 Draft of paper due
- 11/25 Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, part two
- 11/27 Thanksgiving
- 12/2 Conclusion
- 12/8 Final Paper due by 10am
- 12/11 Final Exam (8:00-9:30am)