

Politics 402A – Democratic Political Thought

Whitman College, Spring 2009
Monday, Wednesday 2:30–3:50
Maxey Hall, Room 201

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Course Description

In contemporary American political discourse, ‘democracy’ is often presented as the sole legitimate form of government, but democracy is not without its ambiguities and tensions. How democracy is defined and how it should be reflected in laws, institutions and values are matters of longstanding debate. This course takes an historical and thematic approach to the study of democratic political thought. We will begin by examining the historical roots of democracy in ancient Greece and the reinvigoration of democratic thinking during the Enlightenment. We end with current debates about democracy and democratic participation in the contemporary world. As we explore different historical and contemporary models of democratic theory we will engage the following questions: How have different political thinkers conceptualized democracy? What constitutes a legitimate democratic government? What are the duties and rights of a democratic citizen? What role does equality play in different conceptions of democracy? Is it possible to have a democratic society that does not share a substantive vision of the common good? What are the dangers inherent in democracy? How are these dangers balanced against democratic ideals? In the process of developing answers to these questions, we will think historically, analytically, critically and normatively about the central question posed by democratic political thought: What does it mean to be democratic, and what *should* it mean to be democratic?

Required Books

Course text are available for purchase from the Whitman College Bookstore. Because we will be working on the texts together in class, please purchase the editions listed below.

Plato, *Gorgias*; Hackett
Aristotle, *Politics*, Penguin
Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*; Oxford
Rousseau, *Social Contract*; Penguin
Marx, *Selected Writings*, Hackett
Barber, *Strong Democracy*; UC Press
Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*; Hackett

Additional required readings will be available for download from the library reserve throughout the semester. You *must* print out a hard copy of the reserve readings. The password for the reserves is ‘theory’.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Because this course is a seminar, it is expected that every student will do the reading for each class meeting and be present and ready to engage with the texts and your classmates. Your participation grade will be calculated based on your attendance and your participation in class discussions. In this instance, “participation” is evaluated according to quality of participation as well as quantity.

Discussion Leading (20%)

Each student will be responsible for leading discussion twice throughout the course of the semester. In pairs, you will prepare a class plan which should include a one or two paragraph summary of what you take to be important and interesting in the text under discussion (and which should operate as a frame for the class discussion) and a list of discussion questions with which to engage your classmates during the class period. The plan must be emailed to me by 8pm on the evening prior to your presentation.

Discussion questions and class exercises should seek to dig into the text at hand and to push the class to evaluate the ideas within the text both critically and normatively. In particular, you should focus on what seems complicated and controversial, the implications of the ideas under discussion, and the relationship of the text to other texts we have read throughout the semester.

You are welcome to run the class as you see fit: whole class discussions, focused group discussions, debates, brief brain-storming or writing activities, interpretive dance, sustained and close reading of particular passages are all acceptable means of leading class discussion. Your ultimate goal should be to engage your classmates in an interesting and productive discussion about the texts and their problems; how you go about engaging your classmates is up to you. Remember, good discussion questions do not have simple or easy answers!

Your grade for leading discussion will reflect the quality and incisiveness of your class plan as well as your performance as you lead discussion. I will evaluate your presentation on the basis of your preparedness, your critical understanding of the texts, your ability to identify important questions and issues within the texts, the quality of discussion that emerges from your prompts and your success in engaging and re-engaging your classmates in productive conversation.

Although the primary responsibility for class discussion will lay with the discussion leaders, discussion leaders are merely facilitators of class discussion, not lecturers before whom everyone else may abdicate responsibility. *All* students are expected to be prepared to participate in the discussion and to assist the discussion leaders with questions, arguments and problems.

Written Assignments (70%)

You will write three 6-8 page essays throughout the course of the semester. These essays are to be interpretive, critical pieces with a strong central argument. These are *not* research papers and I neither expect nor want you to use sources beyond the class texts. I will expect to see improvement over the course of the semester, as well as an effort to incorporate my suggestions and comments about previous papers into your later essays. Essays 1 & 2 will each count as 20% of your final grade; Essay 3 will constitute 30%.

I expect that all students will hand in their essays on time. Unless you discuss an extension with me in advance and have an excellent reason for asking for an extension, late papers will be penalized by one half-letter grade per day.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours in Maxey 120A during the following times:

Monday 11-12
Tuesday 1-2
Wednesday 10-11
Thursday 1-2

If you cannot make it to my regularly scheduled office hours, I will be happy to schedule an appointment with you at another time.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the Whitman College Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism policy. The policy can be found online at http://www.whitman.edu/content/academic_resources/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-dishonesty-and-plagiarism as well as in your student handbook. I will report all cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Students, and any student found to have plagiarized will automatically fail the assignment and quite possibly the course. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions.

Reading Schedule

Part I. Democratic Traditions

Classical Conceptions of Democracy

Weds 1/21	Introduction
Mon 1/26	Pericles' Funeral Oration (Cleo)
Weds 1/28	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 1-50
Mon 2/2	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 51-113
Wed 2/4	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> Book I
Mon 2/9	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> Book III

Radical Democracy in the Enlightenment

Wed 2/11	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Books I, II
Mon 2/16	Presidents Day – No Classes
Weds 2/18	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Books III, IV (chs 1, 2, 7, 8)
Mon 2/23	Marx, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> ,
Wed 2/25	Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 1-21
Fri 2/27	<u>First Essay Due</u> Noon, My office

Liberal Democracy

Mon 3/2	Mill, <i>Considerations of Representative Government</i> Chs III, V, VII (through 318)
Wed 3/4	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chs I, IV
Mon 3/9	Pitkin, <i>The Concept of Representation</i> excerpts (ereserve) Urbinati, "Representation as Advocacy: A Study of Democratic Deliberation" (ereserve)

Elitist or 'Realist' Democracy

Wed 3/11	Schumpeter, <i>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</i> , Chs 21, 22 (ereserve)
3/13- 3/29	Spring Break

Part II. Contemporary Models and Problems

Democracy and Civil Society

Mon 3/30 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* Author's Introduction, Vol. 1 Part 1, Chs. 3-4; Vol. 1, Part 2, Chs. 6-7 (ereserve)

Wed 4/1 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part 2, Ch 9; Vol. 2, Part II, Chs 1-8 (ereserve)
V1 Ch 4 (pp. 189-95) *handout*

Mon 4/6 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Chs 1, 21, 24 (ereserve)

Participatory Democracy

Wed 4/8 Barber, *Strong Democracy*, Prefaces (xi-xxiv), Ch 1, Ch 5

Mon 4/13 Barber, *Strong Democracy*, Ch 6, Ch 10

Deliberative Democracy and its Critics

Wed 4/15 Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy" (ereserve)
Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy" (ereserve)

Mon 4/20 Sanders, "Against Deliberation" (ereserve)
Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy" (ereserve)

Wed 4/22 Gutmann and Thompson, "Deliberative Democracy Beyond Process" (ereserve)

Fri 4/24 Second Essay Due

Part III. Global Democracy and Cosmopolitanism

Mon 4/27 Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (read all)
Kant, "Idea for a Universal History"

Wed 4/29 Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, cont'd
Held, "Democracy and Globalization" (ereserve)

Mon 5/4 Archibugi, "Principles of Cosmopolitan Democracy" (ereserve)
Janna Thompson, "Community Identity and World Citizenship" (ereserve)

Wed 5/6 Calhoun, "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism." (ereserve)

Mon 5/11 Last Class: Conclusions & Festivities

5/14 Final Essay Due Noon, My Office