Course Description:

Today, almost everyone in the world seems to be in favor of democracy. But what is democracy and why should we be in favor of it? On close examination, democracy proves to be a particularly elusive concept. The course compares and contrasts philosophical and empirical accounts of democracy, looking at how actual democratic practice, primarily in the United States, measures up to our normative expectations.

In our attempt to get a handle on this concept, we will address the following theoretical questions: What is a democracy? What is the relationship between the democratic ideal and other ideals such as equality, liberty, and solidarity? Is democracy a set of procedural rules or is it a substantive way of life? What is the relationship between democracy and representative government? How responsive should representatives be to their constituencies? Are representative liberal democratic institutions the best possible realization of democratic principles or betrayals of them? What should be the role of citizen participation in a democracy? Should democratic deliberation differ from other forms of deliberation?

Over the course of the semester we will also address the following empirical concerns: Is there evidence that citizens can fulfill the expectations placed on them by democratic theory? How knowledgeable are citizens of public affairs? How important is public deliberation to actual political decision-making? How do citizens choose their representatives? How do political representatives make their decisions? How responsive are they to the people who voted for them? We will not only ask how well the various democratic ideas stand up to the empirical evidence, but also investigate whether there are institutional reforms that could help bring our democratic aspirations and our political practice closer together.

Course Requirements:

This is a discussion-based seminar course. The success of this class depends very much upon your participation, as well as the ideas, questions and interests you bring to the discussion. You must not only read the assignments before class, but also be prepared to discuss them.

You will required to write two 3-5 page precis. In your precis, you should summarize the main arguments or other important issue as succinctly and clearly as you can. You will end each precis with 3 questions which you will present to the class for discussion. You
should sign up for the readings on which you want to write at the beginning of the semester. They are due at **noon the day before** the class in which we will be discussing that reading. Note that you will be evaluated 2/3 on the quality of your write-up and 1/3 on the quality of your discussion leadership.

The in-class midterm examination will focus on key concepts developed during the first half of the semester and on the differences between the various models of democracy that we will have studied. The final exam will consist of a set of guided essays due at the end of the semester.

**Reading List**

*The following books should be available at the bookstore. There are multiple copies of the books as well as other readings available on reserve. Some readings are available online at jstor ([http://www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)).*


Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*

Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*

William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*


Richie and Hill, *Reflecting All of Us: The Case for Proportional Representation*

We also read three chapters from Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*, which is on order for Pol370.

**READINGS**

**Week I: Introduction: The Problems of Democracy**

**Tuesday, Jan. 28: Problems of Mass Democracy**


**Thursday, Jan 30: Maximalist and Minimalist Conceptions**

Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, pp. 8-41


Extended readings:


**Week II: Democracy: The Modern Re-interpretation**

**Tuesday, Feb. 4**

Thursday, Feb. 6

Week III: Democracy: The American Model
Tuesday-Thursday, February 11-13

Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory, whole book

Extended readings:

Week IV: Representative Democracy
Tuesday, February 18
Pitkin, The Concept of Representation, chapter 4-6, pp. 60-143

Thursday, February 20
The Federalist Papers 33 and 51
Manin, The Principles of Representative Government, pp. 95-131

Week V: Analytical and Empirical Perspectives on Representation
Tuesday, February 25
Mayhew, David. The Electoral Connection, Ch. 1 “The Electoral Incentive.” (p. 11-78)

Thursday, February 27

Extended Readings:

Week VI: How do we measure Representation?
Tuesday March 4
Pitkin, The Concept of Representation, Ch. 7-9 (p 144-208)
Thursday March 6
Jacobs and Shapiro. *Politicians Don’t Pander*. Chs. 1-2 (p. 3-74)

**Week VII: Closing Comments on Representation and Midterm**

**Tuesday March 11**
Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*. Ch. 5 (161-192)
Jacobs and Shapiro, *Politicians Don’t Pander*, Ch. 9 (295-324)

Thursday March 13
IN CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION

**March 16-20: SPRING BREAK**

**Week VIII: Cognitive Capacities of the Mass Public**

**Tuesday March 25**


**Thursday March 27**

Extended Readings:

**Week IX: Does the Public Want or Can It Support Democracy?**

**Tuesday April 1**
Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*, Ch. 6 (129-182)
Eliasoph, Nina. *Avoiding politics: how Americans produce apathy in everyday life*. Selections to be announced.

**Thursday April 3**

**Week X: Social Choice Theory: Is Democracy Incoherent?**

**Tuesday-Thursday, April 8-10**

Extended Readings:
Democracy” and Thomas Christiano, “Social Choice and Democracy,” both in The Idea of Democracy

**Week XI: Against Democratic Minimalism: Barber’s “Strong Democracy”**
**Tuesday, April 15**
Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, chapters 1-2, 5, 6 (pp. 1-46, 93-138)

**Thursday, April 17**
Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, chapters 8-9 (pp. 163-260)

**Week XII: Deliberative Democracy**
**Tuesday, April 24**

Sanders, Lynn. “Against Deliberation” in *Political Theory* (June, 1997)

**Thursday April 26**

**Week XIII: One Possible Solution: Proportional Representation**
**Tuesday April 31**
Richie and Hill. *Reflecting All of Us: The Case for Proportional Representation*

**Thursday May 1**
No class today; we will hold an end of semester off campus gathering, location and time to be announced.