

Pol 392: Democratic Theory

Tuesday – Thursday 1:10 – 2:30, Eliot 405

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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 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 be 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>).

Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Economic Democracy* (University of California Press, 1985)

Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*

Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*

William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*

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

Dye and Ziegler, "The Irony of Democracy". Available here:

http://www.reed.edu/~gronkep/pol392-s03/Dye_Reading.pdf

Thursday, Jan 30: Maximalist and Minimalist Conceptions

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

John Mueller, "Democracy and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery: Elections, Equality and Minimal Human Being." *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 36, Issue 4 (Nov., 1992), pp. 983-1003). Available at JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>).

Extended readings:

Norberto Bobbio, *Democracy and Dictatorship*. Hansen, *The Athenian*

Democracy. Finley, *Democracy: Ancient and Modern*

Week II: Democracy: The Modern Re-interpretation

Tuesday, Feb. 4

Rousseau, "On the Social Contract," Books I-II

Thursday, Feb. 6

Rousseau, "On the Social Contract," Books III-IV

Week III: Democracy: The American Model

Tuesday-Thursday, February 11-13

Hamilton, Jay, and Madison. *The Federalist Papers*. Fed 10. Available all over the web, try here: <http://memory.loc.gov/const/fed/fedpapers.html>

Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, whole book

Extended readings:

Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* and *Who Governs*. Bachratz and Baratz "The Two Faces of Power", *American Political Science Review*

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

Fenno, Richard. "U.S. House Members in their Constituency: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review*. (JSTOR).

Page, Benjamin. *Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections*. "The Art of Ambiguity." (p. 152-191).

Extended Readings:

Fenno, *Home Style*. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, *The Personal Vote*. Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, Chs. 1-4.

Week VI: How do we measure Representation?

Tuesday March 4

Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, Ch. 7-9 (p 144-208)

Achen, Christopher. 1977. "Measuring Representation: The Perils of the Correlation Coefficient." *American Journal of Political Science*. (JSTOR)

OPTIONAL OR SKIM THE MODELS: Achen, Christopher. 1978. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science*. (JSTOR)

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

Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Chapter 1 (3-20).

Converse, Philip. "The Nature and Origins of Mass Belief Systems." In David Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*

Thursday March 27

Popkin, Samuel. *The Reasoning Voter*, Chs. 1-4 (p 7-95)

Extended Readings:

Lupia and McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma*. Delli Carpini and Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*

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

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, Chapters 25-28 (pp. 233-262)

Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*. Pgs. 3-36 and 110-184

Week X: Social Choice Theory: Is Democracy Incoherent?

Tuesday-Thursday, April 8-10

Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, whole book.

Extended Readings:

Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics*, Chs. 3-4. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Buchanan and Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent*. Russell Hardin, "Public Choice versus

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

Cohen, Josh. Two essays from *Deliberative Democracy: Essay on Reason and Politics*: Bonham and Rehg (eds). "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," pp. 67-93 and "Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy," pp. 407-430.

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

Thursday April 26

Hibbing and Theiss Morse, *Stealth Democracy*. Chs. 7-8 (163-208).

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.