

Democratic Theory: The Politics and Culture of Democracy
Capstone Seminar in Political Theory 1681

Steven Bilakovics	Course Number: 35700
Class Time & Location:	Monday 11:00 - 1:00 / 4430 Posvar Hall
Office:	4815 Posvar Hall
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I. Course Description

Democracy is one of the dominant and defining ideas of our time. From politics to popular culture, democracy is linked in one way or another to freedom and equality, human rights and justice, the free-market and globalization, and so forth. The democratic rule of the people is widely recognized as the sole remaining source of political legitimacy today. Participation in the democratic process is thought to make us better people, both morally and intellectually. Democratization is considered the path to peace, and it has been used to justify war. At the same time, with democratic political practices apparently in severe crisis, many question whether democracy in America and abroad is even still possible. The fear is that accumulations of money and power, an apathetic and uninformed citizenry, an unrepresentative and corrupt political system, and so on, have led to a loss of faith in democracy. We shall think through these issues and pose critical normative questions for today by exploring the idea of democracy from the ancient Greeks to the present.

II. Course Goals

This course is intended to acquaint students with the debates and dilemmas that surround the idea of democracy, and to critically engage students in these debates. We will pursue four goals in this course. 1) We will carefully read, try to understand, and critique (in that order) each authors writings. To the extent possible possible, we will attempt to leave our prejudices and preconceived notions behind and approach the readings on their own terms, thereby allowing them to unsettle our own often unnoticed assumptions. 2) After analyzing the work of each author, we will attempt to synthesize - compare and contrast - the readings from week to week, with an eye toward big picture themes and issues. 3) While necessary, understanding and evaluating the readings is not sufficient to meet the goals of the course. The ultimate purpose is to bring the insights gleaned from the readings to bear on the world in which we live. At its best, political theory illuminates and helps us interpret our own experiences, ideas, beliefs, and values. 4) Everything in this course is geared toward persuasive argumentation. We want to leave this course able to recognize, develop, and communicate (both orally and in our writing) persuasive arguments.

III. Assignments and Grading

- 1) Midterm Paper 1 (20%) (4-5 pages; Due **February 23rd**)
- 2) Midterm Paper 2 (25%) (6-7 pages; Due **April 6**)
- 3) Final Paper (40%) (10-12 pages; Due **Finals Week**)
- 4) Reaction Papers and Class Participation (15%) (6 papers, 1-2 pages each; Due the weeks of your choosing, but must turn in three by **February 16rd**)

All papers should be Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12pt font, 1 inch margins.

IV. Texts

- 1) The Democracy Sourcebook, Dahl, Shapiro, Cheibub eds.
- 2) On Democracy, Robert Dahl.
- 3) Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville (Goldhammer edition preferred).
- 4) Jihad vs. McWorld, Benjamin Barber.

V. Course Policies

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services as soon as possible. Their web page is <http://www.drs.pitt.edu/>. DRS is in 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY). They will verify your disability and set reasonable accommodations. See the complete policy at <http://www.drs.pitt.edu/policies.html#academic>.

Papers will be marked down one full letter grade for each day late. The only exception is for documented medical emergencies. You are expected to contact me by phone IN ADVANCE of paper due-date to discuss any other possible exceptions.

Don't cheat. If you are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty please ask me. You can also consult the Pitt website for more information:
<http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>

You may appeal your grade by submitting a written statement explaining why the grade is inappropriate. You have one week after the paper is returned to submit your statement to me.

VI. Course Reading & Assignment Schedule

Please bring the relevant book to class

Week 1: Jan 5 (Introduction)

PART I

Week 2: Jan 12 (Democratic Origins and Ideals)

- a. Dahl, On Democracy, chapters 1-7
- b. Thucydides, The Funeral Oration of Pericles, to be distributed
- c. Plato, The Republic, excerpt to be distributed
- d. Aristotle, The Politics, excerpt to be distributed
- e. The Port Huron Statement, excerpt to be distributed

No Class Monday, Jan 19: MLK Day

Week 3: Jan 26 (Types of Democracy)

- a. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 1 (**READ**: Rousseau, Schumpeter, Przeworski, Gutman and Thompson, Diamond, Pateman; **DO NOT READ**: Fishkin, Dahl)
- b. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 6 (**READ ONLY**: Mill, pp. 312-314)
- c. Benjamin Constant, The Liberty of Ancients Compared with that of Moderns, to be distributed

Week 4: Feb 2 (Institutionalizing Democracy; Constitutions and Rights; Free Speech)
a. Dahl, On Democracy, chapters 8-11
b. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 4 (**READ ONLY**: Dworkin, Waldron, Shapiro, pp. 217-231 & 252-255)

Week 5: Feb 9 (Developing Democracy; Capitalism and Globalization)
a. Dahl, On Democracy, chapters 12-15
b. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 2 (**Read**: Lipset, Huber, Huntington; **DO NOT READ**: Skocpol, Przeworski. Jung, Przeworski)
c. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 3 (**READ ONLY**: Putnam, Inglehart and Baker, Przeworski, pp. 158-189)
d. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 8 (**READ ONLY**: Kant, Russett, Hardin)

Week 6: Feb 16 (Radical Democracy)
a. readings to be distributed

Week 7: Feb 23 (Democracy and Religion); 1ST MIDTERM DUE IN CLASS
a. Richard John Neuhaus, The Naked Public Square
(<http://www.heritage.org/Research/PoliticalPhilosophy/HL572.cfm>)

PART II

Week 8: March 2 (Democracy and the American Founding)
a. Federalist 10 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>)
b. Federalist 51 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa51.htm>)
c. Federalist 57 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa57.htm>)
d. Federalist 63 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa63.htm>)
e. Federalist 49 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa49.htm>)
f. Letters of Thomas Jefferson, to be distributed
g. Democracy Sourcebook, chapter 4 (**READ ONLY**: Dahl, pp. 207-216)

No Class Monday, March 9: Spring Break

Week 9: March 16 (Democratic Politics in America)
a. Tocqueville, Democracy in America Vol. I
b. James Fishkin, to be distributed

Week 10: March 23 (Democratic Culture in America)
a. Tocqueville, Democracy in America Vol. II
b. Walt Whitman, Democratic Vistas, to be distributed

Week 11: March 30 (Democratic Culture in America, cont.)
a. Tocqueville, Democracy in America Vol. II
b. Democratic Sourcebook, chapter 8 (**READ ONLY**: Smith, pp. 480-487)

Week 12: April 6 (Threats to Democracy); 2ND MIDTERM DUE IN CLASS
a. Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld

Week 13: April 13 (Threats to Democracy, cont.)
a. Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld

