

POL 511 – Problems in Political Theory (Pro-Seminar)
Topic for Fall 2006: Democratic Theory

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Democracy is one of the most widely endorsed concepts of the modern world and a guiding principle of both domestic political discourse and foreign policy pronouncements. At the same time, there is little agreement about what democracy means, why it might be a good thing, or what institutions give expression to it. Through the study of a variety of historical and contemporary texts, this graduate-level seminar will address these and related questions.

Assessment: 20% participation + 80% writing requirement

Writing Requirement: Either an article-length seminar paper of about 7,500 words or three shorter, critical essays of about 2,500 words each. Seminar paper topics should engage issues related to the theme of the seminar; please talk to the instructor before getting started. The seminar paper is due by January 12th 2007. Short essays should focus on issues that arise in readings (normally including at least some of the recommended reading and not just the essential reading) and/or discussion for a particular week and should be submitted during the course of the term – the first by week 7, the second by week 10, and the third by week 13 (ie a week after the last class).

Readings: I want the class discussions to be attentive to the nuts and bolts of arguments, so the reading list, while imposing, is not as lengthy as it might be in graduate seminars from other subfields. Please come to class having carefully read the essential readings. In a few of the weeks, the essential readings are from canonical authors (Rousseau, Mill, etc) that many students will have studied previously. Although these texts always repay careful rereading, I've added, for these weeks, some 'strongly recommended' readings that students should read if they feel they can spend less time on the primary texts. The 'also recommended' readings are mainly there as a starting point for students who want to write a paper on a particular author or theme. I don't pretend to have provided an exhaustive bibliography on any author or theme.

A number of books we will be reading have been ordered to the U-store. Other readings can be found in the e-reserve section of the Blackboard page for the course, or are readily available electronically (through the main library website or via JSTOR).

September 13th (Wk 1): Introduction

Essential Reading:

Please start reading Aristotle, *The Politics* (recommended translation = Reeves)

September 20th (Wk 2): Aristotle

Essential Reading:

Aristotle, *The Politics*, Bks 1 (esp. secs 1-7, 11-13), 3-7.

Strongly Recommended:

Richard Kraut, *Aristotle*, ch. 12 and pp. 474-6.

Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, ch. 6.

Also Recommended:

David Keyt and Fred Miller, *Companion to Aristotle's Politics*.

Richard Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory*

Jeremy Waldron "The wisdom of the multitude: some reflections on book 3, chapter 11 of Aristotle's Politics" in *Political Theory* v. 23, Nov. 1995

Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal*

Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Class ideology and ancient political theory: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in social context*

Discussion Questions:

Was Aristotle a friend or foe of democracy?

What normative principles figure most prominently in Aristotle's evaluation of different political regimes?

September 27th (Wk 3): MontesquieuEssential Reading:

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bks 1-5, 8 (chs 1-8, 14-20), 9, 10 (chs 1-11), 11 (chs 1-10), 12, 14 (chs 1-6), 15 (1-8), 19, and 20-1 (first few chs of each)

Also Recommended:

Judith Shklar, *Montesquieu*

Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*

Isaiah Berlin, "Montesquieu", in *Against the Current*.

Benjamin Constant, 'On the liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns'

Discussion Questions:

In the end, is Montesquieu a republican, a monarchist, or neither?

Is the Spirit of the Laws mainly a work of political sociology or does it advance a normative argument? If there is a normative argument, what are its principles and what is its structure?

October 4th (Wk 4): RousseauEssential Reading:

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Strongly Recommended:

Joshua Cohen, "Reflections on Rousseau: Autonomy and Democracy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1986).

Gopal Sreenivasan, "What Is the General Will?", *Philosophical Review* (2000);

Also Recommended:

Frederick Neuhouser, "Freedom, Dependence, and the General Will," *Philosophical Review* (1993).

Brian Barry, "The Public Interest" in A. Quinton ed. *Political Philosophy*.

Bernard Grofman and Scott L. Feld, "Rousseau's General Will: A Condorcetian Perspective." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Jun., 1988), pp. 567-76.

David M. Estlund, Jeremy Waldron, Bernard Grofman and Scott L. Feld, "Democratic Theory and the Public Interest: Condorcet and Rousseau Revisited." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4. (Dec., 1989), pp. 1317-1340.

N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau*

Arash Abizadeh, "Banishing the Particular: Rousseau on Rhetoric, Patrie, and the Passions." *Political Theory* 29.4 (2001).

Discussion Questions:

What does Rousseau mean by the general will? Does the theory of the general will offer a distinctive way of thinking about the theoretical justification of democracy? Does Rousseau's political theory suggest that strong democracy can only be bought at the expense of anti-liberalism?

October 11th (Wk 5): The Founders

Essential Reading:

Alexander Hamilton et al., *Federalist Papers*, nos. 1, 9-10, 14-5, 22, 35-9, 47-9, 51, 57, 62-3, 78

Brutus", *The Letters of Brutus*, nos. 1-4.

Strongly Recommended:

Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, ch 1.

Also Recommended:

Stephen Holmes, "Precommitment and the Paradox of Democracy", in *Passions and Constraint*

Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, ch 3

Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, part 3

Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, opening chapters

Discussion questions:

How committed to democratic principles were the authors of the Federalist Papers? Is Madison's argument at Federalist 10 a success?

Note: no meeting on October 18th

October 25th (Wk 6): Mill

Essential Reading:

John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs 1-14.

Strongly Recommended:

Charles Beitz, *Political Equality*, ch 2

Also Recommended:

Dennis Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*

Nadia Urbinati. *Mill on Democracy: from the Athenian polis to representative government*, chs 1-3

Discussion questions:

What normative principles does Mill's argument rely on? What structure does the argument take?

It is sometimes suggested that there are conflicting 'participatory' and 'elitist' strains in Mill's thought, and that he was 'ambivalent' about democracy. Do you agree with this assessment or do you think there is a single, unified theory informing the various things he says in the essay relating to democracy?

November 8th (Wk 7): Marx and LeninEssential Readings:

Marx, excerpt from *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, in David McLellan (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, pp. 32-41.

Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto",

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>), chs 1-2

Marx, "Preface to a Critique of Political Economy"

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface-abs.htm>)

Marx and Engels, "The Civil War in France" (Engels' 1891 'Introduction', and 'The Paris Commune') (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/index.htm>)

Lenin, "State and Revolution"

(www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm), chs 1-5.

Also Recommended:

Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Expanded Edition* (2004), ch 12.

Keith Graham, *The Battle of Democracy*

L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. 1: The Founders*.

Discussion Questions:

Marx is sometimes said to have attached more importance to economics than to politics. Do you agree with this assessment?

What is the structure of the argument that leads Lenin to endorse the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'?

November 15th (Wk 8): SchmittEssential Reading:

Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Also Recommended:

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

J. Habermas, 'On the Relation Between the Nation, the Rule of Law, and Democracy', in *The Inclusion of the Other*.

Charles Larmore, 'Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberal Democracy', in *The Morals of Modernity*.

Chantal Mouffe (ed.) *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*

David Dyzenhaus (ed.), *Law as politics : Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism*

Discussion Questions:

How compelling is Schmitt's critique of liberal democracy?
Is it correct to think of Schmitt's position in *Crisis* as 'fascist'?

November 22nd (Week 9): SchumpeterEssential Reading:

Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, part 4 (chs 20-3).
Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense", in C. Hacker-Cordon and Ian Shapiro (eds) *Democracy's Value*
Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*, chapter 3

Also Recommended:

Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, section on Schumpeter
William Nelson, *On Justifying Democracy*, chapter on Schumpeter
Anthony Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*
Robert Dahl, "Procedural Democracy", reprinted in Goodin and Pettit, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*

Discussion Questions

Schumpeter is sometimes read as proposing an 'economic theory of democracy'.
What does this mean and is it a correct interpretation of Schumpeter's position?
What are the implications of Schumpeter's account for the normative questions relating to democracy?
Assessment of Przeworski paper.

November 29th (Week 10): RawlsEssential Reading:

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 31-7
Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Lecture 8, "The Basic Liberties and their Priority"
Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", in *Collected Papers* (and in *The Law of Peoples*).

Also Recommended:

Joshua Cohen, "For a Democratic Society", in *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*
Amy Gutmann, "Rawls on the Relationship between Liberalism and Democracy", in *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*
Charles Larmore, "Public Reason", in *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*
H.L.A. Hart, "Rawls on Liberty and its Priority", in Daniels (ed) *Reading Rawls*.
Norman Daniels, "Equal Liberty and Unequal Worth of Liberty", in Daniels (ed) *Reading Rawls*.
Charles Beitz, *Political Equality*, ch. 5.

Discussion Questions:

What is the structure of Rawls's argument for democracy?
Assess Rawls's view that certain requirements of 'public reason' should constrain the conduct of officials and citizens in a democracy.

December 6th (Week 11): Deliberative Democracy

Essential Reading:

Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy", widely reprinted, e.g. in Goodin and Pettit, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, ch. 1

Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy", in *Democracy and Difference*.

Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy", in Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference*

Also Recommended:

Jon Elster (ed.) *Deliberative Democracy*

J. Bohman and W. Rehg (eds) *Deliberative Democracy*

S. Macedo (ed.) *Deliberative Politics*

Journal of Political Philosophy, June 2002, special issue on deliberative democracy

A. Gutmann and D. Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*

Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation", *Political Theory* (1997)

Discussion Questions

Is democracy compromised in some important respect when it is not very deliberative? What is the normative principle underlying deliberative democracy?

What are the institutional implications of deliberative democracy?

What are the main objections to deliberative democracy?

December 13th (Week 12): Some Recent Work

Essential Reading:

Philip Pettit, "Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory", in Ian Shapiro and Stephen Macedo (eds) *NOMOS 42: Designing Democratic Institutions*.

Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement*, ch 5

Jon Elster, "The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory", in Bohman and Rehg (eds) *Deliberative Democracy*

David Estlund, "Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority", in Bohman and Rehg (eds) *Deliberative Democracy*

Also Recommended

Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Expanded Edition* (2004), final chapter on "fugitive democracy".

Discussion Questions

Assessments of individual papers listed above.