WWS 300 DEMOCRACY

Spring 2009

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the following topics, among others: theoretical conceptions of democracy, the formation of the state, democratic transitions and democratic consolidation, electoral representation and political accountability, the relationship between democracy and redistribution, welfare and democracy, and colonialism/globalism and democracy.

Here is a sample of the questions we will examine in the course: Why are there states? Under what conditions do countries become democratic? What is the role of civil society in democratic performance? What are the politics of democratic governance? What is the relation of liberalism to democracy?

In the first part of the course we will study the development of early modern theories of the state. We will begin with Hobbes, the first of the modern theorists, and move on to Locke, the primary liberal theorist. We will then examine the radically skeptical views of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who challenged what had become Lockeian orthodoxy, before taking a look at the conservative approach of Edmund Burke and the radical challenge of Karl Marx. This will set the stage for the study of contemporary problems of democracy.

In the second part of the course we turn our attention to explore the twin problems of economic development and political liberalization. Why do countries differ in their level of economic development? Why is democracy absent in a broad sway of the world? Does democracy matter? Can democratic governments shape the economy according to their political preferences or electoral commitments? Or are they constrained by any 'exogenous' forces?

We first explore why economic development has been elusive in most of the globe. After showing the limitations of purely economic models of growth, we consider how political institutions, social norms, the distribution of wealth and the inheritance of colonialism shape growth rates. This discussion of the political and institutional sources of growth also includes an analysis of the historical forces that shaped, in turn, those institutions. We finally consider the extent to which elections and politicians shape the economy in the short run in democratic countries. We close the course by looking at the formation of welfare states across countries – here we pay special attention to differences in the internal structure of public spending between the United States and Europe.
Organization

The course will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 to 10:50 a.m., and each student will also be assigned to a precept. Most of the class meetings will be lectures, but there will also be frequent class discussions.

Required materials will include a few books to be purchased which are available at Labyrinth Bookstore and material on e-reserve through the Stokes Library. Books to be purchased are listed on the syllabus and noted by the symbol (*).

There will be an in-class final examination. Each student will also be expected to submit two four-page response papers, one in lieu of the mid-term examination, the other later in the term. Grading will be based 45% on the final exam, 40% on the two short papers, and 15% on class participation.
PART I. (Weeks 1-6). THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY.

Week 1 & 2. Foundations of State Power.

Week 3. Foundations of Liberal Institutions.

J.J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Entire. (*)

Week 6. Two Critiques of Liberal Democracy.
Burke, selections from the *Conservative Reader*.
Karl Marx. *On the Jewish Question*. (&)
Karl Marx. *The Communist Manifesto*. (&)
PART II. (Weeks 7-12). THE TWIN PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

Week 7. Economic Development: Technology or “Institutions”?

Required Reading


Further Reading


Required Reading

The Problem of Political Order


Constitutions and Credible Commitment


Dictatorships and Democracy


Week 9. Social Norms, Political Culture and Growth

Required Reading


**Week 10. One World or Many Worlds? Colonialism, Inequality and Economic Stagnation.**

**Required Reading**


**Week 11. Creating Liberal States and Democratic Regimes.**

**Required Reading**


**Required Reading**


