A. Course content

This course in political theory examines the ideal of democracy. 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. The course will pose three closely related questions: (1) What is democracy? (2) What is the value and justification of democracy? (3) Through what institutions and under what social conditions can democracy be realized? In reflecting about these questions, students will read a variety of key texts from the history of political thought and contemporary political theory.

The lectures and readings will be organized around four important episodes in the development of democratic thought:

1. the debate about democracy in classical Greece
   - readings from Plato and Aristotle

2. the eighteenth-century problem of democracy and republicanism in large states
   - readings from Montesquieu, Rousseau, Constant and the Federalist and Anti-Federalist authors.

3. the crisis of parliamentary democracy in early twentieth-century European thought
   - readings from Marx, Lenin, Carl Schmitt, and Joseph Schumpeter

4. the contemporary debate about ‘deliberative’ democracy
   - readings from Joshua Cohen, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, Ian Shapiro, and William Galston

B. Grading

Short essay #1  20%  (due in precept during week of Feb 27th)
Short essay #2  20%  (due in precept during week of Apr 24th)
Precept Participation 10%
Notes:
- The short essays should be 1500 – 2000 words in length and should answer one of the pre-assigned questions.
- The assigned questions will be posted on Blackboard in the first week or two of term.
- Late papers: 1/3 of a grade will be deducted for every 2 working days late or part thereof.

C. Readings

The following books have been ordered to the U-store:

Plato, Republic
Aristotle, The Politics and Constitution of Athens
Montesquieu, Spirit of the Laws
Rousseau, On the Social Contract
James Madison et al., The Federalist Papers
Carl Schmitt, The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy

The readings from Marx and Lenin can be accessed online. Follow the links given in the syllabus below.

All other compulsory readings in the syllabus below are available on Blackboard and/or Electronic Reserves.

D. Course Calendar

Week 1 (Feb 6th)

Lectures:
- introduction to course & topic
- the problem of democracy in ancient Greece

Readings:
- Plato, Republic, 327a-362c, 368a-392c, 412b – 445e

Week 2 (Feb 13th)

Lectures:
Plato’s ideal city
- Plato’s critique of democracy

Readings:
- Plato, *Republic*, 471c-502c, 514a-527d, 543a-576b

Discussion question for precept: How persuasive do you find Plato’s position on democracy?

**Week 3 (Feb 20th)**

Lectures:
- Aristotle on ‘man as a political animal’
- Aristotle on inclusion and exclusion

Readings:

Discussion question for precept: Was Aristotle a friend or foe of democracy?

**Week 4 (Feb 27th)**

Lectures:
- Aristotle on political regimes
- Montesquieu’s classification of governments

Readings:
- Aristotle, *The Politics*, Bk V (secs 1, 5, 7-9), VI (secs 1-7), VII

Discussion question for precept: Why does Aristotle prefer the ideal regime of Bk VII to all the other forms of regime he discusses earlier in *The Politics*?

**Week 5 (Mar 6th)**

Lectures:
- Montesquieu on political liberty
- Montesquieu’s legacy

Readings
- Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Bks 8 (chs 1-8, 14-20), 9, 10 (chs 1-11), 11 (chs 1-10), 12, 14 (chs 1-6), 15 (1-8), 19
Discussion question for precept: In the end, is Montesquieu a republican, a monarchist, or neither?

Week 6 (Mar 13th)

Lectures:
- Rousseau and the problem of legitimacy
- Rousseau’s ‘general will’

Readings

Discussion question for precept: Rousseau’s political theory has been called ‘profoundly anti-liberal’. Do you agree with this assessment?

Week 7 (Mar 27th)

Lectures
- Rousseau – a ‘totalitarian democrat?’
- Constant on ancients versus the moderns

Readings
- Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Bks III and IV (chs 1-3, 6-9)
- Constant, ‘On the liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns’

Discussion question for precept: Do you agree with Constant’s analysis of the democratic possibilities permitted by modernity?

Week 8 (April 3rd)

Lectures:
- the problem of republicanism in large, modern states
- the Federalist/anti-Federalist debate

Readings
- “PUBLIUS”, *The Federalist Papers*, nos. 1, 9-10, 35-9, 47-9, 51, 57, 62-3, 78

Discussion question for precept: How committed to democracy were the authors of the Federalist Papers?
**Week 9 (Apr 10th)**

Lectures:
- Marx and democracy
- Lenin on state and revolution

Readings
- Marx and Engels, “The Communist Manifesto”,
  ([http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm)), chs 1-2
- Marx, “Preface to a Critique of Political Economy”
- 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](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](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm)), chs 1-5.

Discussion question for precept: Is Lenin’s view on democracy indefensible?

**Week 10 (Apr 17th)**

Lectures:
- Carl Schmitt’s critique of parliamentary democracy
- Schmitt and fascism

Readings
- Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Discussion question for precept: Can Schmitt’s criticisms of parliamentary democracy be answered?

**Week 11 (Apr 24th)**

Lectures:
- Schumpeter’s two models of democracy
- Schumpeter’s legacy

Readings
- Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, pp. 250-83
- Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*, chapter 3
- Adam Przeworski, “Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense”

Discussion question for precept: How compelling do you find the Schumpeterian theory of democracy?

**Week 12 (May 1st)**

Lectures:
- What is deliberative democracy?
- Challenges to deliberative democracy

Readings
- Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, ch. 1
- Joshua Cohen, “Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy”
- Ian Shapiro, “Enough of Deliberation”
- William Galston, “Diversity, Toleration, and Deliberative Democracy”

Discussion question for precept: Is deliberative democracy intolerant towards people who don’t share liberal views?