POL 190B: Democratic Theory
Spring 2017
Room: Shiffman Humanities Ctr 125
W, 2:00 – 4:50 PM

Professor Jeffrey Lenowitz
Lenowitz@brandeis.edu
Olin-Sang 206
Office Hours: Thursday 3:30 - 5 [by appointment]

Course Description:

This course focuses on the theory, concept, and practice of democracy. What is democracy? What are its basic principles and the chief institutional means through which democracies make decisions? What are its strengths? How do we evaluate the quality of democratic outcomes and is this even important? How does representative government fit into the concept of democracy? At the same time, this course will also interrogate powerful critiques of democracy that have existed since its inception, including worries related to tyrannical majorities, the lack of a common good, the ignorance of the masses, and the endangerment of individual liberty. In the end, students will hopefully come away from the course with a greater appreciation and knowledge of the rich theories of democracy that have evolved over the last two and a half millennia, and the continual challenges that humans face trying to articulate, justify, and implement the best form of this particular system of political order.

Objectives & Learning Goals

The goals of this course are many. Four of them are as follows:

1. To become acquainted with and gain general competence in the key normative problems, concepts, and questions in democratic theory.

2. To further develop and sharpen the ability to think critically in an analytically rigorous way, and to give articulate expression of this thinking through both oral communication and written work.

3. To give you the tools to become more active, knowledgeable, and critical democratic citizens; to shake up how you conceptualize and understand the rights and liberties you hold.

4. To develop the capacity to focus on and listen to presentations and discussion, to contribute actively and productively to the latter, to digest main points immediately, and to effectively take hand-written notes that synthesize class content.
Requirements and Grading:

Attendance is mandatory unless accompanied by a legitimate explanation given ahead of time. However, attendance is not enough. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings in accordance with the class schedule and to be prepared to discuss them in depth. This course involves some lecture but is mostly based around vigorous discussion. This means doing the reading before class is absolutely necessary.

Note that this is Four-Credit Course with three hours of class-time per week. This means that success is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, exam preparation, etc.).

The breakdown of the grading for undergraduates is as follows:

- **Participation, 20%** [attendance, classroom participation, online reading comments]
- **Presentation, 10%** [prepare 20 minutes of material and a handout]
- **Take-home midterm, 20%**
- **Short Paper, 20%** [1250-1500 words]
- **Final Paper, 30%** [2000 – 2500 words]

Graduate students will write one long paper (20 – 30 pages) instead of the midterm and papers.

* Please note that if you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai)). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

Technology Policy:
No phones, tablets, smart watches, recording devices, or computers should be in use during the class. Checking either of them will result in a reduced participation grade. However, if there are exceptional circumstances that require you to use a computer, come talk to me and we can see about the possibility of an exception.

**Late Assignment Policy:**

Late assignments, defined as any assignment turned in more than 15 minutes after the deadline with prior notification, will be downgraded one grade step (i.e. a B+ would automatically become a B). After this, a further grade step will be lost for every day that an assignment is late. For example, a B paper due on Friday but handed in on Monday will receive a C-. Papers submitted more than four days after the due date will not be accepted.

**Texts Available for Purchase:**

The following books should be purchased. All other readings will be available via Latte or through a course packet.


**Class Schedule**

**ORIGINS & FUNDAMENTALS**

1. **Introduction** (January 18)
   - Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. Book 2, Chapter 34-36. [in-class]

2. **Athenian Democracy** (January 25)
• Aristotle. *Politics*. Book III.1, 6-13; IV.3-4, 9

• Dahl, Robert A. *Democracy and Its Critics*. Chapter 1

3. **Republican Alternatives & Rousseau** (February 1)

• Cicero. *On Duties*. Sections 49-86.


• Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. I.1, 6-7; II.1-4, 6; IV.1-3

4. **Representative Democracy** (February 8)

• Madison, James. “Federalist 10.”

• Mill, John Stewart. *Considerations on Representative Government*. Chapter 5, 8

• Douglas, Frederick. “Claims of our Common Cause: Address of the Colored Convention Held in Rochester, July 6-8, 1852.”


5. **Aristocratic Representation & Majority Rule** (February 15)


**Short Paper Due March 2**

**CRITICS & CRITICISM**

6. **Tyranny of the Majority** (March 8)


7. Possible Protections Against Tyranny (March 15)


MIDTERM DUE

8. Minimalist Critique; Guardianship (March 22)


• Dahl, Robert A. Democracy and Its Critics. Chapter 4

• Selection from Plato’s Republic.

MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

9. Minimalism & Proceduralism (March 29)

• Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper Col-

• Dahl, Robert A. *Democracy and Its Critics*. Chapters 6 -8. [skim 7 if pressed for time]

10. **Deliberative Democracy** (April 5)


• Habermas, Jurgen. “Three Normative Models of Democracy.” *Democracy and Differ-


11. **More Deliberative Democracy, and Some Criticism** (TBD)

• Ackerman, Bruce and James S. Fishkin. “Deliberation Day.” *Journal of Political Philos-


175 – 195.

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

12. **Book** (April 26)

   *To be determined*

13. **Democracy, in America?** (May 3)


• Müller, Jan-Werner. “The People Must Be Extracted from Within the People”: Reflections on Populism.” *Constellation* 21, No. 4 (2014).

**FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 3**