

DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Fall 2019 – Preliminary

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Lecture: Mon. and Thurs. 1:30-2:20pm*
Room: HH-305
Office: KTH-537
Office Hours: TBD

* Note that the class may occasionally also meet on the third scheduled class time on Wednesday as announced in advance in class, by email, and on the course Avenue page.

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Course Description

Today just about everyone agrees that democracy is the best form of government, and that political life should be organized democratically. But what exactly does that mean? Although the etymology of the word is clear – in ancient Greek *demos* meant ‘people’ (from ‘district,’ into which citizens were organized) and *kratos* meant power, so that in a democracy the people have the power – the theoretical and institutional implications of the concept are complex and difficult to articulate. This class examines the historical development of thinking about democracy as well as contemporary debates about its nature, complexities, and difficulties – what democracy is, but even more, what it can and should be.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of a political range of crucial concepts and themes from throughout the history of western democratic theory; to enhance students’ ability to read carefully and critically complex theoretical texts; and to further develop the capacity to formulate an understanding of the concepts and themes of these theories in a rigorous and systematic fashion. The course’s written assignments aim, first, to practice the ability not only to understand particular texts and arguments but to deal with them in a comparative, critical, and synthetic way and, second, to engage critically, rigorously, and respectfully with the ideas and arguments both of these texts and of one’s fellows.

Required Materials and Texts

- David Held’s *Models of Democracy*, 3rd ed. (Stanford University Press, 2006) is required and available for purchase at the bookstore.
- Other readings will be made available online.

Class Format

There are two hours of lectures each week. Regular attendance and careful preparation for the lectures are essential. Although there will be some time in the lecture periods to raise and discuss issues, online discussion provides the main opportunity for participation. Students are expected to devote at least the equivalent of one hour per week to carefully reading and thoughtfully posting to the online discussion forum. They should post consistently throughout the term, dividing their posts between direct engagements with the readings and critical reflection on their fellows’ interpretations as well as questions arising from the lectures and in-class discussion.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Attendance and participation – 10%
2. Online discussion – 35%
3. Mid-term, Oct. 23 – 20%

4. Cumulative take-home final exam, due Dec. 11 – 35%

Course Evaluation – Details

Attendance and participation (10%)

Attendance will be taken by sign-up sheet during class. Perfect attendance and no participation will result in an A- (8/10). Every unexcused absence after the second will result in a 1-point penalty. Constructive participation in class discussion will be rewarded. Owing to the size of the class, lack of participation will not be penalized.

Online discussion – Avenue to Learn posts (35%)

You are responsible for posting TWELVE times: at least TWO comments/questions and FOUR replies before the midterm (Oct. 23) and least TWO comments/questions and FOUR replies after the midterm but before the end of classes (Dec. 4). Each must be at least a short paragraph (four sentences) in length, and should reflect a substantive engagement with the readings and with your fellow students. You may post more times than required. In each period your mark will reflect your contribution to online discussion as a whole. Late posts will not be counted – start early!

Mid-term (20%), in class October 10

The midterm will be written in the regular classroom. It will test all material up to that point in the course and will include a choice among short-answer (quotation identification) and short essay questions.

Cumulative take-home final exam (35%), due December 11

The final exam will be distributed on the last class meeting and will require you to respond in essay form to two of four questions covering the whole term's material. Due by the end of Wednesday, December 11 via the class's Avenue to Learn dropbox.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (September 5)

Introduction

Readings:

Held, *Models of Democracy*, Introduction.

Week 2 (September 9 and 12)

Ancient Democracy

Readings:

Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration," tr. B. Jowett, *The Peloponnesian Wars*.

Plato, *The Republic* (Online Library of Liberty), VIII: 555b-569c.

Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. Bekker (Online Library of Liberty), excerpts.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 1-28.

Week 3 (September 16 and 19)

Rome & Republicanism

Readings:

Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (Online Library of Liberty), excerpts.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 29-43.

Week 4 (September 23 and 26)

Popular Sovereignty

Readings:

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, (Online Library of Liberty), excerpts.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (Online Library of Liberty), excerpts.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 43-55.

Week 5 (September 30 and October 3)

Liberalism & Representation

Readings:

Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns" (Online Library of Liberty).

James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (Online Library of Liberty), nos. 10 and 51.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 56-95.

Week 6 (October 7 and 10)

October 7 – Review

Readings: None

October 10 – Mid-term (in class)

Readings: None

Week 7 (October 14 and 17)

MID-TERM RECESS – No Classes

Week 8 (October 21 and 24)

Democratic Society

Readings:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (University of Chicago, 2000), excerpts.

Week 9 (October 28 and 31)

Democratic Elitism

Readings:

Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (Harper, 1962), excerpts.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, ch. 5.

Week 10 (November 4 and 7)

Revolution & Democracy

Readings:

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin, 2006), ch. 6.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, ch. 4.

Week 11 (November 11 and 14)

Participation & Deliberation

Readings:

Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge, 1976), ch. 2.

Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," *Constellations* 1:1 (1994): 1-10.

Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 209-16, ch. 9.

Week 12 (November 18 and 21)

Radical Democracy

Readings:

Held, *Models of Democracy*, ch. 10.

Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," *Constellations* 1:1 (1994): 11-25.

Jacques Rancière, "Democracy, Republic, Representation," *Constellations* 13:3 (2006): 297-307.

Week 13 (November 25 and 28)

Populism

Readings:

Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies* 47:1 (1999): 2–16.

Jan-Werner Müller, "Parsing populism: Who is and who is not a populist these days?" *Juncture* 22:2 (2016).

Thea Riofrancos, "Democracy Without the People? What if populism is not the problem, but the solution," *n+1 online* (Feb. 7, 2017).

Week 14 (December 2)

New Horizons?

Readings:

David Graeber, "There Never Was a West – Or, Democracy Emerges from the Spaces In Between," in *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire* (AK Press, 2007).

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

The final exam is to be submitted as a single .doc, .docx, or .pdf file to the appropriate dropbox on the course Avenue site.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D

MARK	GRADE
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late Avenue posts for the online discussion activity will not be considered. Late final exams will be penalized at a rate of one letter grade (10%) off the exam grade per day.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Attendance will be taken by sign-up sheet during class. Every unexcused absence after the second will result in a 1% penalty on your overall grade, up to a maximum of 10% (the entire Attendance & Participation grade).

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need

for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.