

DEMOCRATIC THEORY
POLSCI 3VV3
Winter 2022, Term 2

Instructor: Lev Marder
Email: marderl@mcmaster.ca
Lecture: TuWeFr 12:30PM - 1:20PM
Room: BSB 117

Office: On Zoom
Office Hours: TBA

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Course Description

Democracy is a concern. For those who define it as a desirable regime or event, the question is how to bring it about or defend it. For those who define it as a threat, it is a question of how to subvert it. For those who define it as a system, the question is how does it or can it ever really work. In this course we will not take the meaning of democracy for granted and instead examine its ancient and contemporary meanings complexities, and future possibilities. In the first part of the course, we will develop appreciation of the ancient and contemporary meanings and values of democracy. In the second part of the course, this will help us evaluate the contemporary challenges intrinsic to democracy: from diversity and psychological capacity to disinformation, populism, and economic inequality. We will conclude the course by considering how democracies whither and what the future of democracy may hold.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course,

- students will be familiar with a variety of ancient and contemporary definitions, justifications, and models of democracy
- students will be able to discuss and assess the value and shortcomings of democratic theories and practices
- students will be able to synthesize the knowledge, and critically apply the theories of democracy and understanding of challenges to actual contemporary cases or questions, individually and in groups

Transferable Cognitive Skills:

- Students will be able to summarize and present ideas clearly and concisely.
- Students will be able to read texts written by political thinkers, and critically analyze the structure and content of their arguments.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the ideas of different thinkers, recognize their underlying assumptions, and comparatively evaluate them.

Required Materials and Texts

Texts are all available through A2L

Class Format

After the introduction, the course is designed to prepare students to apply what they learn each unit on a weekly basis starting on Fridays. On Fridays, you will have a lecture. Next Tuesday-Wednesday we will have a class discussion, presentation, and application of learned material to a particular question, set of question, or case study.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Short position paper responding to a provocation (4-5 pages, 20%)
2. Group presentation (15%)
3. Weekly Response Assignments (3x4 pages, 10% each for a total of 30%)
4. Completion of ungraded “Weekly Response Assignments” (4 assignments, 2.5% each)
5. Final Vlog Assignment (15%)
6. Course participation (10%)

Course Evaluation – Details

Short Position Paper Responding to a provocation (4-5 pages, 20%)

After the first unit examining different models, meanings, and values associated with democracy, you will be presented with a provocative proposition to respond to using course material from the first 4 weeks. Using that material, you will defend your position on the proposition in a 4-5 page paper.

Group Presentation (15%)

Starting in Week 5, you will begin to put democratic principles in practice by leading discussion of the week’s material on Tuesdays. Further instructions will be given in the first weeks of the course.

Weekly response assignments (40%)

On Wednesdays after the first four weeks of the course I will pose a question or set of questions based on a case study, problem, or legal case. Your task either individually or in groups of 4-5, depending on the task, will be to respond to the question(s) using the week’s course material. I will walk around the rooms to help you write the best responses. Participation in the Wednesday class and response preparation is mandatory and the grade for non-participation will be 0 on the assignment. The final written responses are due on Sunday at 11:59pm every week. three of the seven responses will be graded (10% each). The other five responses will count towards the 2.5% completion mark.

Participation (10%)

Perfect attendance will earn 8%/10%. Absences will reduce that by 1%. To earn 10%, excellent participation involves consistently coming to classes, demonstrably having read the material, staying for the entire class, paying full attention to what others in the class are contributing, and making valuable contributions to the discussion.

Final Vlog (15%)

Detailed instructions will be released closer to the end of the course.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 11-12)

Introduction

Readings: Gad Horowitz, "The Deep Culture of Canadian Politics," Inroad Journal 40.

Week 2 (January 14-19)

Ancient Greek Understanding of Democracy

Readings: -Thucydides. Pericles' Funeral Oration.

-Jeremy Waldron, "The Wisdom of the Multitude: Some Reflections on Book 3, Chapter 11 of Aristotle's Politics," Political Theory 23(4): 563-584 (1995).

-Dunn, John. Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy, Second Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. pp. xvii-xxviii

Week 3 (January 21-26)

Radical democracy or what does equality have to do with democracy?

Readings: -Jacques Ranciere, "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge"

-Richard Rorty, "Democracy and Philosophy". Eurozine June 11 2007

-Rainer Knopff: "How Democratic Is The Charter? And Does It Matter?"

Week 4 (Jan 28-Feb 2)

The Question of Representation

Readings: -Nadia Urbinati and Mark E. Warren, "The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory," Annual Review of Political Science 11: 387-412 (2008).

-Lisa Disch, "Toward a Mobilization Conception of Democratic Representation," American Political Science Review 105(1): 100-114 (2011).

Week 5 (Feb 4-9)

Value of Democracy

Readings: -Elizabeth Anderson, "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value," in Thomas Christiano and John Christman, eds., Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 213-228.

-Mark E. Warren, "A Problem-Based Approach to Democratic Theory," American Political Science Review 111(1): 39-53 (2017).

Week 6 (Feb 11-18)

Deliberative Democracy (Feb 11-16)

Readings: -Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 1.

-Jane Mansbridge, "Does Participation Make Better Citizens?" *The Good Society* 5(2): 4-7 (1995).

-Simone Chambers, "The Philosophic Origins of Deliberative Ideals," in André Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark E. Warren, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Feb 18: Beginning of Week 8 lecture: The Multicultural Challenge

Readings: -Will Kymlicka and Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Democracy and Multiculturalism" in R. Cohen-Almagor, Editor, *Challenges to Democracy: Essays in Honour and Memory of Isaiah Berlin* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000)

-Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'," *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657 (1999).

-M. Steven Fish and Robin S. Brooks. 2004. 'Does diversity hurt democracy?' *Journal of Democracy* 15(1): 154–166.

Week 7 (Feb 22-24) Break: Reading Week

Week 8 (Mar 1-2)

The Multicultural Challenge (continued)

Readings: -Will Kymlicka and Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Democracy and Multiculturalism" in R. Cohen-Almagor, Editor, *Challenges to Democracy: Essays in Honour and Memory of Isaiah Berlin* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000)

-Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'," *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657 (1999).

-M. Steven Fish and Robin S. Brooks. 2004. 'Does diversity hurt democracy?' *Journal of Democracy* 15(1): 154–166.

Week 9 (Mar 3-9)

The Psychological Challenge or Who is Competent for Democracy?

Readings: -Shawn Rosenberg. "Rethinking Democratic Deliberation." *Polity* 33(3):336-360.

-Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaëli Bloch-Elkon. 2008. 'Do the facts speak for themselves? Partisan disagreement as a challenge to democratic competence.' *Critical Review* 20(1-2): 115-139.

-Hugo Mercier and Hélène Landemore. 2012. "Reasoning is for Arguing: Understanding the Successes and Failures of Deliberation." *Political Psychology* 33(2):243-258.

Week 10 (Mar 11-16)

Fake News and Disinformation

Readings: -Svolik, Milan W. 2019. "Polarization Versus Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 30(3): pp. 20-32.
-Mercieca, Jennifer R. 2019. "Dangerous Demagogues and Weaponized Communication." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 49(3): pp. 264-279.
-Pomerantsev, Peter. 2019. "The Disinformation Age: A Revolution in Propaganda." *The Guardian*. July 27, 2019.

Week 11 (Mar 18-23)

Populist Challenge and Economic Inequality

Readings: -Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens. 2007. 'Populism versus democracy.' *Political Studies* 55(2): 405-424.
-Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2012. 'Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy' Chantal Mouffe. 2019. *For A Le Populism*, chs. 3-4.
-Bartels, Larry M. 2017. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.
Recommended: Solt, Frederick. 2008. "Economic inequality and democratic political engagement." *American Journal of Political Science* 52(1): pp. 48-60.

Week 12 (Mar 25-30)

How Democracies Whither

Readings: -Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown. Chapter 1.
-Varol, Ozan. 2015. "Stealth Authoritarianism." *Iowa Law Review* 100(4): pp. 1673-1742. Parts I, II and III.

Week 13 (Apr 1-6)

Future(s) of Democracy

Readings: -Daniel Bell. 2015. *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*, chs. 1-2.
-Yann Allard-Tremblay. "The Two Row Wampum: Decolonizing and Indigenizing Democratic Autonomy." *Polity* (Forthcoming).

Week 14 (Apr 8-12)

Vlog discussions

Course Policies

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
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Submission of Assignments and Late Policy:

Written assignments aside from reading responses are due at 11:59pm in the dropbox online on the day indicated in the syllabus.

Late assignments, without proper documentation and prior agreement with your instructor when possible, will receive a 10% daily deduction including weekends. Online forum contributions cannot and will not be accepted late, because they are time-sensitive.

If you know that you will have a few assignments due in several classes on the same day, come talk to your instructor about it early (at least two weeks before the deadline) and a short extension may be granted. Extensions are official only in written form, when confirmed through email.

Reading, Email, Office Hour and Other Rules:

Every student is responsible for all required readings. Some of the texts are more difficult than others. Students are expected to come to every class online having read the reading assigned for that class.

I will be happy to meet with you through zoom, please reach out, let me know what times work for you, and I'll be happy to chat. Come, sit, relax in the virtual office and if you want to talk about the university in general or the course in particular, I'll be glad to see you. My rule for both email communication and office hours is that you meet me half way. (For example, just asking what does Plato think of equality doesn't give me anything to work with in order to help you out). Be prepared to tell me what you know and what you understand so that we can build on that basis to enrich your understanding and experience.

I will reply to emails within 24 hours (and usually much much much much quicker) between Monday-Friday, so if you do not get a reply from me within 24 hours, the wires must have crossed somewhere and you should email me again to make sure your email gets through. Please don't hesitate to resend emails in those cases, as quick communication under these circumstances is paramount and I'd love to help.

Please refrain from emailing on Saturday and Sunday out of respect, to give me some downtime from email. Emails sent on the weekend will not be answered, expect perhaps with a reminder to not email on weekends.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): 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".

Courses With An On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

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 details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

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 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.

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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

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.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

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.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.