

Democratic Theory

Government 6645 (Spring 2016)
Cornell University
W 4:30-6:30
White Hall 114

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Office Hours: W 1:30-3:30

Course description

Democracy, once commonly derided as the worst of all regimes, is now just as often proclaimed the universal source of modern political legitimacy. There is little agreement, however, over what democracy means or how it is best embodied in state institutions and law. This seminar will attempt to bring these disagreements into conceptual focus by introducing students to select debates in contemporary democratic theory over the meaning of democracy and the normative scope and limitations of contemporary democratic practice. Beginning with the early modern history of popular sovereignty and ending with contemporary debates over democracy and neoliberalism, we will explore (but not limit ourselves to) the following questions: How do democratic theorists and democratic actors negotiate the paradoxes of collective self-rule? Is democratic theory an empirical or normative inquiry, or does it destabilize this very opposition? Who is the agent of democratic politics? How should we understand the interaction between formal democratic institutions and political culture? What is the relationship between liberalism and democracy? Do rights (as protections of individual liberty not subject to revision by majority rule) suspend democracy or establish its necessary preconditions? Is democracy premised on a unitary political identity and, if so, how does it accommodate or recognize difference? Is democracy best understood as a form of government or a practice of resistance to domination? What do we expect from democratic theory and how should we understand the relationship between democratic theory and democratic practice?

Course Requirements

This is a political theory graduate seminar. Grades will be based on a research paper (20-25 pages) due at the semester's end (65% of the total), a short (7-8 page) written response to one week's reading (15%), a 15-minute oral discussion of another student's written response (10%), and general seminar participation (10%). Students must attend and participate in seminar meetings. More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Students will also be asked to submit three questions regarding each week's reading. These questions will be assembled weekly and distributed to all seminar participants. Student questions and the written responses must be submitted to me by email NO LATER than 5:00 pm on the Monday before the seminar meets. The written responses should provide a close and critical account of the week's reading, focusing on one or two central arguments. Written responses are meant to provoke seminar discussion, so please avoid summary and feel free to be (thoughtfully) contentious. These papers must include direct citation (with footnotes) and engage some

of the recommended literature. Each seminar will begin with another student's 15-minute discussion of *the written response*. These oral presentations should also avoid summary and instead pose a series of textually critical questions that can facilitate seminar discussion. A sign-up sheet for both written responses and oral discussions will be available the first week of class, and then posted on Blackboard.

Books to purchase

Available at the University Bookstore:

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Zone)

Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Penguin)

Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin)

Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign* (Cambridge)

Material marked "*" is available on Blackboard.

Weekly Readings

Week 1 (August 24): Political Theory and the People

Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy"*

Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy"*

Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value"*

Recommended:

Giorgio Agamben, "What is a People?"

Margaret Canovan, *The People*

Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence"

Jacques Derrida, "The Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority"

Jürgen Habermas, "What is a People?"

William Hazlitt, "What is the People?"

Frederick Whelan, "Democratic Theory and the Boundary Problem"

Week 2 (August 31): What is Popular Sovereignty?

Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign* (Cambridge)

Recommended:

Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*

Daniel Lee, *Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought*
Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*

Week 3 (September 7): Rousseau and Modern Democratic Legitimacy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Recommended:

Louis Althusser, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx*
Seyla Benhabib, "Deliberative Rationality and Models of Democratic Legitimacy,"
Constellations 1:1 (1994)
William Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, 41-67
Alan Keenan, *Democracy in Question: Democratic Openness in a Time of Political Closure*, 1-75
John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 191-250.
Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*
Maurizio Viroli, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Well Ordered Society*
Elizabeth Wingrove, *Rousseau's Republican Romance*

Week 4 (September 14): Democracy and Revolution

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

Recommended:

Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America*
James Kloppenburg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought*
R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*

Week 5 (September 21): Tocqueville and Social Equality

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 11-70, 201-485, 803-822

Recommended:

Roger Boesche, *Tocqueville's Road Map*
Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*
Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*
Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals*
Cheryl B. Welch, *De Tocqueville*
Cheryl B. Welch, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*
Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville between two worlds: the making of a political and theoretical life*

Week 6 (September 28): Constituent Power and Liberal Constitutionalism

Andreas Kalyvas, "Constituent Power"*
Carl Schmitt, Constitutional Theory (selection)*
Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Recommended:

Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Foundations*
Martin Loughlin and Neil Walker, eds., *The Paradox of Constitutionalism: Constituent Power and Constitutional Form*
Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt*, 66-115
David Dyzenhaus, ed., *Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*, 23-36, 109-58, 179-95
Jon Elster, "Deliberation and Constitution Making"
Peter Hallward, "The Will of the People"
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison September 6, 1789
Andreas Kalyvas, "Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power," *Constellations* 12:2 (2005)
John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*, 157-205
Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 36-59
Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*

Week 7 (October 5): Maximalist Democracy and Political Praxis

Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics*

Recommended:

The Port Huron Statement
Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*
Rom Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*
Jason Frank, "Between the Electorate and the Multitude: Populism and Praxis"
Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America*
Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*
Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized; Grassroots Democracy in America*

Week 8 (October 12): Contemporary Political Liberalism

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xiii-xxxiv, 1-172

Recommended:

Rom Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, 1-42

Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 17-35
John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985)
Sheldon Wolin, "The Liberal/Democratic Divide: On Rawls' *Political Liberalism*," *Political Theory* (February 1996)

Week 9 (October 19): Public Reason and Democratic Legitimacy

Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference*, 21-31*
Jürgen Habermas, "Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls' *Political Liberalism*," *The Journal of Philosophy* 92 (3)*
John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 212-54, 435-90

Recommended:

Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in *Democracy and Difference*, 67-94
William E. Connolly, *Why I am not a Secularist*, 1-46
Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?"
Robert Goodin, *Innovating Democracy: Democratic Theory and Practice after the Deliberative Turn*
Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"
Thomas McCarthy, "Kantian Constructivism and Reconstructivism: Rawls and Habermas in Dialogue," *Ethics* 105: 1 (1994)
Joel Olson, "The Freshness of Fanaticism"
John Rawls, "Reply to Habermas," *The Journal of Philosophy* 92 (3)
Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* (June 1997)
Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy & Tradition*, 63-91
Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues," in *Religion in the Public Sphere: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate*
Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference*, 120-35
Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," *Political Theory* 29:5 (2001)

Week 10 (October 26): Affect and Political Identification

Patchen Markell, "Making Affect Safe for Democracy? On 'Constitutional Patriotism,'" *Political Theory* 28:1 (2000)*
Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism*, 46-92.*
Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?"*
Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

Recommended:

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

Seyla Benhabib, Danilo Petranovic, and Ian Shapiro, eds., *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances*

Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*

Abraham Lincoln, "The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions"*

Martha Nussbaum, ed. *For Love of Country?*

Rogers M. Smith, *Political Peoplehood*

Rogers M. Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership*

Jacqueline Stevens, *States without Nations*

Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*

Bernard Yack, *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community*

Week 11 (November 2): Race and Political Identity

Eddie Glaude, *Democracy in Black*

Recommended:

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Barbara J. Fields and Karen Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*

Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of DuBois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America*

Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*

Mark M Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses*

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*

Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*

Week 12 (November 9): Radical Democracy 1: Wolin

Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy"*

Sheldon Wolin, "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy" *

Sheldon Wolin, "The People's Two Bodies"*

Sheldon Wolin, "Transgression, Equality, Voice"*

Sheldon Wolin, "What Revolutionary Action Means Today?"*

Recommended:

Aryeh Botwinick and William E. Connolly, eds., *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political*

Romand Coles, "Democracy and the Radical Ordinary: Wolin and the Epical Emergence

of Democratic Theory”
Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*
Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation”
Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*
Sheldon Wolin, *The Presence of the Past*
Nicholas Xenos, ed., *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*

Week 13 (November 16): Radical Democracy 2: Rancière

Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*
Jacques Rancière, “10 Thesis on Politics,” *Theory & Event* 5:3 (2001), 1-10*

Recommended:

Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*
Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*
Jacques Rancière, “Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?” *South Atlantic Quarterly*
103:2-3 (2004)*

Week 14 (November 23): THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15 (November 30): Democracy, Neoliberalism, and the Crisis of Collectivity

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*

Recommended:

Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*
David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*
Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*

Final papers due by 5:00 p.m., December 16th .