

POT 4311: Problems of Democracy (Fall 2022)

Instructor: Yuanxin Wang
Meeting Times: M, W, F (11:45am-12:35pm)
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Classroom: Little 0121
OH: W 1:30-3:30 pm, or By Appointment

Course Description

The global popularity of democracy today has been increasingly haunted by its ambiguous meaning and contested substance. While it has been often associated with various ideas such as freedom, equality, constitution, representation, and even revolution, democracy, the venerable Greek term, originally signifies the rule (*kratos*) by the people (*demos*). But who are the people? How do and should they rule? What are the justifications and, if any, limitations of their ruling? An investigation on how *past* political thinkers and activists reflected on these questions not only helps us de-familiarize and problematize *current* opinions about democracy but also points toward alternative *futures* of democratic ideals.

This advanced undergraduate course situates the ongoing debates about democracy and its problems in a larger historical and philosophical framework. We will study a sampling of classic and contemporary literature on democracy. We will begin with the history of democracy, ranging from ancient Athenian democracy to revolutionary democracies in the modern world, and draw insights from their advocates and critics. We will then return to the contemporary world and examine debates about the normative values and justifications of democracy. Finally, we will interrogate current challenges to democracy (i.e. populism, racial domination, social media) and consider various attempts to solve or mitigate these problems.

Course Objectives

1. Foundational Knowledge: Students are expected to understand key historical ideas and moments in the development of democracy and identify key debates in contemporary democratic theory as presented in the course.
2. Application and Integration: Students are expected to develop an ability to apply and synthesize the concepts and arguments they have learned in the course to analyze democratic theories and practices.
3. Learning to Think Differently: Students are expected to develop a reflexive perspective on the reading material. They are also encouraged to develop a capacity to think critically and differently by exploring democratic theories beyond the confine of the canonical traditions and prevailing practices.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on 5 components:

1. Class attendance and participation (15%)

Regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential to your achievement in this course. *Attendance in this course is mandatory and role will be taken at the beginning of each class meeting.* When you come to class, you should come prepared to discuss the material that has been assigned for that class. This means that you are expected to do the reading to be covered during a given class in advance.

2. Weekly discussion questions (15%)

In addition to participating during class, you are required to prepare discussion questions for each Friday class meeting which is based on a seminar format. *You must post at least TWO discussion questions on the Canvas page of the course by noon on Thursday of each week.* (*In Week 8 and 12, we will have seminars on Wednesday, so the discussion questions will be due by noon on Tuesday.) The questions should be well situated in the text and highlight some points of the week's reading that you find important and/or noteworthy. *At least ONE question should refer to the text that the instructor has not lectured on* (in most cases, that means the required reading for the class on Friday). Please note: no late submission of weekly discussion questions is accepted.

3. Two response paper/seminar presentations (15% each)

You are required to write TWO response papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman) in lieu of the weekly discussion questions and make TWO brief presentations accordingly at the beginning of the Friday seminar. (*You do not have to post discussion questions on the weeks you are assigned to write and present papers.) Your response paper (10%) and in-class presentation (5%) will be evaluated separately.

In the paper, you are expected to lay out the key points of the text(s) in a clear and concise manner and elaborate on 1-2 concepts or arguments that you find important and/or fruitful for discussion. Please note: a good response paper is not a summary of *the author's* arguments but *your* critical commentary on the text(s). You will need to refer extensively to the text(s) and interpret crucial passages to demonstrate the nuanced meanings, theoretical import, and/or practical significance of the concepts/arguments in question. By pointing out any gaps, oversights, unstated assumptions, and contradictions in the author's argument, you will be developing your own position.

You will have 5-8 minutes for your seminar presentation. At 8 minutes, you will be asked to stop the presentation regardless of your progress. So do NOT read your paper verbatim. Clearly state what you are attempting to prove or assert in the paper (namely, your thesis), present the textual evidence for it, and interpret this evidence. You may also want to pose additional questions that could not be fully addressed in your response paper.

For full credit you must email your response paper (as a PDF or as a Microsoft Word document) to the instructor by noon on Thursday, or the day before your in-class presentation. The instructor will then distribute your paper to the rest of the class via Canvas. This will enable your classmates to read and ruminate on your paper before the seminar. *ONE response*

paper/seminar presentation must be done by Week 8. The highest grade for a late response paper in the absence of a legitimate excuse is C+. An example of a legitimate excuse would be an illness for which you have a signed doctor's note. Please be aware: a "C+" is not the lowest grade a late assignment can receive; it is the highest (i.e., it is the ceiling, not the floor).

4. Midterm exam (15%)

5. Final exam (25%)

The course is out of 100 total points, and the Grading Scale is as follows: 93-100 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 63-66 (D); 60-62 (D-); 0-59 (E; failing)

More information on UF grading policy may be found at [Grades and Grading Policies](#). Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with [university policies](#).

Policy on Academic Integrity

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." [The Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. *The instructor will also circulate a mid-term feedback form.* Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion. Phones should be turned off prior to class.

Policy Regarding in Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see [the Notification to Students of FERPA Rights](#).

Material and Supply Fees

There are no additional fees for this course.

Campus Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [one.uf](#) for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

Readings and Assignments Schedule

***Please note that the syllabus can be changed as needed during the semester. ***

***These mandatory readings might be complemented with additional readings through the semester, provided by instructor. ***

Week 1 Introduction (Aug 24-26)

Aug 24 Syllabus walkthrough

Aug 26 De-familiarizing democracy: historical and normative perspectives

**Sign up for response paper/seminar presentation.*

PART I: THE BIRTH OF DEMOCRACY: ANCIENT ATHENS

Week 2 (Aug 29-Sept 2) Athenian Democracy: Eulogy and Sarcasm

Aug 29 Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, paragraph 3, 5-12, 20-22, 27-28; Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration," from *History of the Peloponnesian War* [24pages]

Aug 31 Aristophanes, *The Wasps*, Act One, Scene 1 [49 pages]

Sept 2 Landauer, "The "Idiōtēs" and the Tyrant: Two Faces of Unaccountability in Democratic Athens" [28 pages]

Presenters:

Week 3 (Sept 5-9) The Trial of Socrates: The City and Man

Sept 5 No Class (Holiday)

Sept 7 Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*; Plato, *The Republic*, Book VIII, pp.233-249 [52 pages]

Sept 9 Kraut, "Socrates and Democracy," section 1-4, from *Socrates and the State* [22 pages]

Presenters:

Week 4 (Sept 12-16) Aristotle: The Multitude and Citizens

Sept 12 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III, Chapter 6-13, 17-18; Ober, "The Original Meaning of "Democracy"" [27 pages]

Sept 14 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV, Chapter 2-6, 8-9, 11-12; Book VI, Chapter 1-5 [30 pages]

Sept 16 Cammack, "Aristotle on the Virtue of the Multitude" [28 pages]

Presenters:

PART II: MODERN DEMOCRACY AND REVOLUTIONS

Week 5 (Sept 19-23) Revolution and Democracy: An Introduction

Sept 19 Wolin, "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing democracy" [23 pages]

Sept 21 Locke, *The Second Treatise*, Chapter 2, 8-9, 19 [29 pages]

Sept 23 Nacol, "The Risks of Political Authority: Trust, Knowledge and Political Agency in Locke's Second Treatise" [16pages]

Presenters:

Week 6 (Sept 26-30) Revolution and Democracy in America

Sept 26 Declaration of Independence; Thomas Jefferson's letter to James Madison; James Madison's Letter to Thomas Jefferson; *The Federalist*, #10, #14 [19 pages]

Sept 28 Abigail Adams's letters to John Adams and Mercy Otis Warren; Jefferson, *Notes on the state of Virginia*; David Walker, *Appeal*; William Apess. *Eulogy on King Philip* [53 pages]

Sept 30 Allen, *Our Declaration* [pages TBD]

Presenters:

Week 7 (Oct 3-7) Revolution and Democracy in France

Oct 3 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter 1, 6-8; Book II, Chapter 1-4, 6-7; Book III, Chapter 3-7; Book IV, Chapter 1 [35 pages]

Oct 5 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Female Citizen"; Sieyès, "What is the Third Estate?" [35 pages]

Oct 7 Schumpeter, "Two Concepts of Democracy", pp.153-177 [25 pages]

Presenters:

Week 8 (Oct 10-14) After Revolution: Social Movements and Struggle for Inclusion

Oct 10 Shklar, "Voting," from *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* [53 pages]

Oct 12 Wolin, "What revolutionary action means today?" [12 pages]

Presenters:

**Response papers and weekly discussion questions will be due by noon, Oct 11.*

**All Students should finish their first response paper/seminar presentation by Week 8.*

Oct 14 Midterm Exam

PART III: JUSTIFYING DEMOCRACY

Week 9 (Oct 17-21) Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

Oct 17 Dahl, "Pluralism, Polyarchy, and the Common Good," from *Democracy and Its Critics*, pp.289-293; Arneson, "Democracy is not Intrinsically Just" [24 pages]

Oct 19 Christiano, "Democracy as the Public Realization of Equality," from *The Constitution of Equality* [37 pages]

Oct 21 Anderson, "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value" [16 pages]

Presenters:

Week 10 (Oct 24-28) Equality and Majority Rule

Oct 24 Waldron, "The Core of the Case against Judicial Review" [61 pages]

Oct 26 Risse, "Arguing for Majority Rule" [24 pages]

Oct 28 Elster, "Tyranny and Brutality of the Majority" [18 pages]

Presenters:

PART IV: CURRENT CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY

Week 11 (Oct 31-Nov 4) Populism(s)

Oct 31 Urbinati, "Political Theory of Populism"; Canovan. "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy" [32 pages]

Nov 2 Müller, "Introduction" and "What Populists Say", from *What is Populism?* [40 pages]

Nov 4 McCormick. "Democracy's Crisis and the Populist Cry of Pain" [22 pages]

Presenters:

Week 12 (Nov 7-11) Trust and Distrust

Nov 7 Warren, “Democratic Theory and Trust” [36 pages]

Nov 9 Krishnamurthy. “(White) Tyranny and the Democratic Value of Distrust”; Catala, “Democracy, Trust, and Epistemic Justice” [33 pages]

Presenters:

**Response papers and weekly discussion questions will be due by noon, Nov 8.*

Nov 11 No Class (Holiday)

Week 13 (Nov 14-18) Democracy and the Color Line

Nov 14 Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Introduction and Chapter 1 [40 pages]

Nov 16 Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation”; Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’” [35 pages]

Nov 18 Hooker, “Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of U.S. Black Politics” [22 pages]

Presenters:

Week 14 (Nov 21-25) Democratic Conduct in the Condition of Oppression

Nov 21 Green, “Learning How Not to be Good: A Plebeian Perspective,” from *The Shadow of Unfairness* [30 pages]

** Only ONE weekly discussion question should be posted on Canvas by noon, Nov 22. No response paper/seminar presentation this week.*

Nov 23 No Class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 25 No Class (Thanksgiving)

Week 15 (Nov 28-Dec 2) Re-Imagining the Democratic Space: Immigration & Social Media

Nov 28 Abizadeh, “Democratic Theory and Border Coercion”; Miller, “Reconceiving the democratic boundary problem” [38 pages]

Nov 30 Chambers, “Truth, Deliberative Democracy, and the Virtues of Accuracy: Is Fake News Destroying the Public Sphere?”; Forestal, “The Architecture of Political Spaces: Trolls, Digital Media, and Deweyan Democracy” [30 pages]

Dec 2 Dryzek, “The Forum, the System, and the Polity: Three Varieties of Democratic Theory”
[27 pages]

Presenters:

Week 16 (Dec 5-7) Wrap-Up

Dec 5 Wrap-Up Lecture

Dec 7 Review Session

Dec 9 No class (Reading Days)

FINAL EXAM: Dec 13 (3-5pm in Little 0121)