This course will explore the subject of democratic theory from ancient Athens to the present. What is democracy? What is the value of democracy? What are the limits to democratic theory and democratic practice? How radical or transformative is the idea of democracy?

Goals & Objectives

We shall be attempting to identify arguments in the assigned readings. What are the authors' premises and conclusions? Do their arguments work on their own terms? Do their arguments work on our terms? What do the authors' arguments mean for contemporary political life?

My teaching philosophy emphasizes three primary objectives. I strive to (a) foster understanding of key concepts and their wider applicability (b) construct a collaborative atmosphere in which students feel comfortable trying out new ideas, and (c) encourage students to appreciate and value course ideas.

Learning is a two-way street. Students are expected to do their part by keeping up with course readings, raising questions in class, and actively participating in discussions.

Office Hours

In addition to regularly scheduled office hours, additional office hours are available by appointment. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss paper theses, outlines, and drafts with the instructor. Please don't hesitate to stop by; my door is always open.

Midterm Course Evaluation

Halfway through the semester, students are asked to complete an optional (but strongly encouraged) midterm course evaluation. This is a chance for students to offer constructive comments on the course. After midterm evaluations are completed, the instructor will discuss potential changes to the course.

Required Texts


\(^1\)Draft syllabus. Last updated: November 9, 2015
Recommended Background Reading


Course Requirements

**Thesis Statement Identification:** Throughout the course of the semester, select ten book chapters or articles. For each book chapter or article selected, write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main thesis. What is the author’s main point? What did the author want you to learn? Thesis summaries are due Friday 5pm of the week in which the article or chapter is assigned. Graded on completion. *10% of final grade.*

**Critical Essays:** Three critical essays. 1500 words each. Topics to be announced. Essays due at the beginning of class. Due dates TBA. *75% of final grade.*

**Final Exam:** Short answer questions. Some exam questions will be provided periodically in lecture. *15% of final grade.*

Readings & Schedule

**Part I. Models**

**Week 1. Athenian Democracy and Lottery**


**Week 2. Protective Democracy**


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*The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*
Week 3. Developmental Democracy

Week 4. Participatory Democracy

Week 5. Deliberative Democracy

Week 6. Epistemic Democracy
Part II. Problems

Week 7. Majority Rule


Week 8. Representation


Week 9. Political Equality


Week 10. Democracy and Difference


Week 11. Citizen Competence


Week 12. Pluralism


**Week 13. Consensus**


**Selected Recommended Readings**


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3Democratic theory is a massive subject. We only have time to cover a small sliver of the field. Do not hesitate to inquire about topics you would like to learn more about.


