Democracy and Democratic Theory

Political Science 320
Spring, 2010
MWF 11:50-1:05
Dewing 310

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Office hours: TBA

Course Description and Goals

This class is designed as an upper-level, seminar-style course in political theory, and is generally not recommended for first-year students (if you have questions about whether this class is appropriate for you, please come see me as soon as possible). In this course, we will critically explore liberal, communitarian, deliberative, and radical approaches to the theory and practice of democracy. Concepts such as participation, deliberation, citizenship, justice, and equality will be examined. The course material is grounded in contemporary political issues such as voter apathy, the rise of corporate power, globalism, and the struggles of minority groups for rights and recognition. In working through this material, we will learn to identify and evaluate differing theoretical approaches to political problems; to examine our own hidden assumptions and form conscious judgments regarding collective dilemmas; to deliberate with others; and to apply a variety of concepts and frameworks to contemporary political settings. Debate and discussion will be a central component of this course.

Course Requirements

Participation: 10%
Response Papers (6): 25%
Short Papers (2): 40%
Final Paper: 25%

• Reading and Class Participation (15%)
You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. Read for comprehension rather than completion, paying attention to broad themes, approaches, and arguments. What sorts of problems are raised by the authors? What sorts of solutions do the authors propose? How do they go about convincing readers of their arguments? How do the different readings fit together or oppose one another? How are the ideas raised related to relevant current events?

Second, you are required to come to every class prepared for discussion. In some instances I will provide relevant background material, but this will not be a lecture course. A good way to prepare for discussion is to jot down a few contradictions, dilemmas, or particularly interesting or important points raised by the texts. Or make note of a pithy quotation that is sure to spark discussion. You are also encouraged to bring in news stories related to the course material. Your thoughtful and consistent participation is expected, and will be appreciated most of all by your classmates.
• Response Papers (6; about 2 pages each; taken together, 20%)
You will turn in 6 short, critical response papers, each not less than two pages in length. Excluding Weeks One and Ten, with two additional weeks of your choice excepted, you will turn in no more than one paper per week. The papers will address some aspect of the reading assigned for that day, and are due at the beginning of class. No late papers will be accepted.

In these short papers, you are to engage critically with the day’s reading material. For the most difficult readings, perhaps the best you can do is to restate, in your own words, what you take to be the author’s main argument. In most cases, you should situate the readings vis-à-vis larger course themes, offer a comparison to other texts, relate the readings to current events, or begin to formulate a criticism. Additionally, at the end of each response, you should raise 2-3 substantive questions for class discussion, and you should be prepared to read your response aloud to the class.

Whatever you do, these papers are not to be thrown together at the last minute, but should reflect your thoughtfulness and commitment to the course. All the best papers follow the rules of grammar and punctuation and are organized well, but in grading the short papers, I will also be looking for evidence that you are keeping up with and struggling to make sense of the readings.

• Papers (2; 5-6 pages, 20% each)
In these longer papers, you should expand on a theme that you explored in an earlier “response” paper or that emerged in class discussion. These papers are due on Monday of week 6 and Friday of week 9. Further details about these assignments will be provided in class. Please come see me if you have any questions about this, and I encourage you to come to my office hours to discuss your thesis with me.

In terms of evaluation, “A” papers stand out—they are clearly superior in form and content. Papers in the “A” range demonstrate an ability to write elegant prose and have virtually no typographical errors; they contain an easily discernible, interesting, original, clearly-stated argument; they are consistent and logical in content; they make superior use of textual support; they engage the subtleties of difficult arguments through coherent textual analysis; and their organization lends flow and structure to the paper. “A” papers demonstrate a clear and imaginative grasp of the material, draw connections between non-obvious points, and go beyond what has been covered in class.

Papers falling into the “B” range have many of the qualities of an “A” paper, but do not stand out from the crowd in the same way. They are “average” in the sense that they contain a developed and coherent argument, and demonstrate an ability to write decent prose. They are organized logically, and while they may contain some writing errors, they still follow the rules of grammar and punctuation. Additionally, a “B” paper might be superior in form but not in content, or vice versa.

Papers falling into the “C” range have some serious flaw in either form or content. For example, they might display significant errors in grammar, punctuation, or organization, impeding your ability to express your thoughts clearly; or, the central argument might be very difficult or impossible to identify; or the basic claims of the argument are left unsupported; or the thesis merely summarizes the material. I will rarely assign a grade lower than a C-. Such a grade indicates that the paper is in some way unacceptable, in which case you should come see me as soon as possible.
• Final Paper (8-10 pages, 25%)
Your final paper will expand on some aspect of one or more of your earlier papers. In this way, your writing for this class will build on itself. More details on this assignment will follow. It will be due by 4pm on Tuesday of finals week.

Course Policies

• Academic Integrity & the Honor System
Kalamazoo College follows an Honor System, and we will follow those guidelines in this class. All work produced in this course must be your own. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Any violation of academic integrity will result in an automatic failure of the assignment in question, and the violation will be reported to the Dean of Students. You will also be expected to behave with honor. You are an important contributing member to a collective academic enterprise, and you owe it to yourself, your classmates, and your instructor to conduct yourself accordingly. We will strive to be curious, open to new ideas, respectful and cooperative, and committed to scholarship. To review the Kalamazoo College honor system in full, see http://www.kzoo.edu/studev/honorsystem.htm.

• Attendance and Timeliness
Attendance does not formally comprise a portion of your final grade. However, in determining your participation grade, I will take into account your overall contribution to the vitality of the course. Obviously, if you are absent, you cannot participate. Likewise, I expect that you will arrive on time (and I will make every effort to do the same). Arriving late is disruptive and disrespectful, and it will adversely affect your participation grade.

• Late Assignments and Extensions
Short response papers will not be accepted late – no exceptions. They are due at the beginning of class, in hard copy, with a staple. You may not turn in a response paper on a day you are absent from class. For other assignments, if you are experiencing exceptional circumstances, I encourage you to come speak with me before the assignment is due. Otherwise, for each class period past the due date of the assignment, you will lose one letter grade. I do not accept assignments via email.

• Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

Required Texts

• David Held, Models of Democracy
• Benjamin Barber, Strong Democracy
• David Mathews, Politics for People
• Manfred Steger, Globalism, 2nd Edition: Market Ideology Meets Terrorism
• Handouts or articles available on the internet, marked (“*”) in the course schedule
**Course Schedule (subject to change)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Introduction: Models of Democracy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 3/29</td>
<td>➔ Read syllabus after class!</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 3/31</td>
<td>David Held, <em>Models of Democracy</em>, introduction and chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 4/2</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<th>Week Two</th>
<th>Models of Democracy, cont.</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/5</td>
<td>Held, chapter 2: Republicanism</td>
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<td>W 4/7</td>
<td>Held, chapter 3: Liberalism</td>
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<td>F 4/9</td>
<td>Held, chapter 4: Direct Democracy</td>
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<th>Week Three</th>
<th>Liberalism and Liberal Democracy</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/12</td>
<td>*Madison and Hamilton, selected <em>Federalist Papers</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 4/14</td>
<td>*J.S. Mill, selections from <em>Representative Government</em>&lt;br&gt;*Rawls, selections from <em>A Theory of Justice</em></td>
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<th>Week Four</th>
<th>Liberalism: Critiques</th>
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<tr>
<td>F 4/23</td>
<td>Barber, Part I, chapters 4-5</td>
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<th>Week Five</th>
<th>Radical Democracy</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/26</td>
<td>Benjamin Barber, <em>Strong Democracy</em>, chapters 6-8</td>
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<td>W 4/28</td>
<td>Barber, <em>Strong Democracy</em>, chapters 9-10</td>
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<td>F 4/30</td>
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<th>Week Six</th>
<th>Deliberative Democracy</th>
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M  5/3  David Mathews, *Politics for People*, Parts 1-3
    → Long Paper #1 Due
W  5/5  Gay McDougall in class
F  5/7  Mathews, Parts 4-6

Week Seven  *Deliberative Democracy*
M  5/10  Held, chapter 9
W  5/12  *Jurgen Habermas, selections*
        *Seyla Banhabib, “Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy”*
F  5/14  *Iris Young, “Communication and the Other”*
        *Susan Bickford, “Reconfiguring Pluralism”*

Week Eight  *Agnostic Democracy*
M  5/17  *Hannah Arendt, “What is Politics?” and “What is Freedom?”*
W  5/19  *Chantal Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy or Aongistic Pluralism?”*
F  5/21  TBA

Week Nine  *Competitive Elitism and the Corporation*
M  5/24  Held, ch. 5
W  5/26  Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, selections TBA
F  5/28  Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, selections TBA
    → Long Paper #2 Due

Week Ten  *Globalism and Democracy*
M  5/31  Memorial Day – No Class
F  6/4  Steger, ch. 4-6

Final paper due no later than 4pm on Wednesday, June 9