

## **American Democracy in Theory and Practice**

Political Science: 5810: 01  
Senior Seminar, Summer 2006  
University of Utah

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Office Hours: M/W 2:00-3:00

First Session  
5/15 – 6/21  
M/W 10:30-1:45  
Classroom: BUC 304  
4.0 Credit Hours

*We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawakened, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted – Walt Whitman*

### **Course Description and Goals**

This senior seminar is dedicated to the critical study of American democracy in history, theory, and practice. The purpose of this course is to combine an historical and theoretical understanding of the nature and status of American democracy alongside an empirical assessment into some of the on-going challenges for American politics today. We begin with the constitutional founding of America to consider the critical question: how democratic is the constitution? We turn next to a study of 19<sup>th</sup> century American life as the “high water” mark of popular civic engagement, and then dedicate ourselves to the critical examination of current democratic theory and practice. In this latter section of the course we will be particularly concerned with understanding the causes and consequences of certain present-day developments such as: declining rates of voting, civic disengagement, race, class, and generational disparities in political participation, the decline of political parties, and problems in the American electoral system.

The goal of this course is to enable you to approach a pressing contemporary problem of American democracy (of your choosing) and provide an independent assessment of that issue in a significant research paper that will: (1) consider the historical dimensions of the problem; (2) address the theoretical issues at stake; (3) critically assess the most recent data/research available; (4) offer alternatives/solutions to the problem under investigation.

Suggested research topics will be discussed on the first day of class, but the general fields of inquiry include the following:

- (1) National Electoral Processes
- (2) Local Politics/Community Involvement
- (3) Education and Public Schools
- (4) Public Associations/Groups

### **Course Requirements**

This course fulfills the University's **Upper Division Communication and Writing Requirement**. Hence this course is both writing intensive and one that demands active student participation in classroom discussions. Toward these (interrelated) ends, the requirements of this course are as follows:

- **Attendance and Participation: 10%.** As a senior seminar this class places a premium on your active participation throughout the semester. Every student is expected to come to class *prepared* to actively contribute to our group discussions of the required readings every session. *This is not a lecture course.*
- **Two Reading Quizzes: 10% each.** These short exams will test your understanding of the required readings assigned in this course. No make-up dates will be scheduled for these exams.
- **Research Proposal and Presentation: 10%. Due 5/31.** A Research Proposal is an initial statement of the research question that you want to address in your seminar paper. In approximately three pages, your typed proposal should address the following three questions: (1) what issue or controversy is at stake in this paper; (2) what is the relevance or significance of this question/controversy to this course (i.e., what is the relationship to American democracy); (3) what literature/materials/sources will you draw upon to address this research topic.

Each student will give a short (five minute) presentation about their selected area of research. These presentations will give you a chance to talk about the relevance and value of our topic, and to identify fellow students with similar research interests.

- **Literature Review: 15%. Due 6/14.** A literature review is a selective, critical discussion of some of the most relevant scholarly research that deals with your paper topic. Your review will consist of a short summary and critical discussion of at least five **scholarly** sources (such as journal articles, books, or monographs) that directly pertain to your research topic. Please see me if you have questions about the materials that would be most relevant for your project. Approximately 10 pages.

- **Rough Draft: 15%. Due 6/21.** On the final regular day of class you will submit the most complete draft of your paper to date. Your draft will be returned to you by regular post with my comments, so plan on submitting your paper with a self-addressed manila-folder. We will also hold an in-class Writing Workshop on this date, so bring three copies of your draft to this final course session.
- **Final Research Paper: 30%.** A 15-20 page paper reflecting your independent and original research on a topic related to this course. **Final Papers Due: 12:00 p.m., August 4th.**

**\* Please Note:** There are no exceptions to any of these deadlines, there are no “make-ups” or “extra credit” options available for this course, and the Marriott Library Research Session (6/5) and the in-class Writing Workshop (6/21) are **mandatory** for this class (*you will fail the attendance and participation grade for this class if you do not attend these sessions*).

The University of Utah, Department of Political Science seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, <http://disability.utah.edu/> 162 Olpin Union Bldg, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification.

#### **Student Academic Conduct:**

**The University of Utah’s policies pertaining to Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty will be carefully observed and strictly enforced in this class. This policy appears on pages 11-13 of the 2000-2002 General Catalog and in the electronic Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>**

Any instance of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may also result in a failing grade for the course. The University’s definition of plagiarism is as follows:

“Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.

**Required Readings:**

The following required book is available at the University Bookstore”

*Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About it*, Stephen Macedo, et. al., Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

**Reserve Readings:**

All other required readings for this class are available at the Reserve Desk of the Marriott Library. These readings are also available electronically through the Library’s web site. To access these readings electronically follow these steps: from the Library’s home page (<http://www.lib.utah.edu/>), under the heading “Research Tools,” click on the link labeled “Course Reserves,” and from there you can submit the course listing (POL S 5810 002 Annual 2006 2007) or course instructor (Button) to read, download, or print any of the assigned readings for this class.

**Course Schedule and Required Readings:**

**Please Note:** All assigned readings are to be completed *prior* to the class session for which they have been assigned. Also, the organizational structure of this course has been designed to serve as a template for the general structure of your final research paper: I. Theory and Principles of Democracy; II. Problems in American Democracy: Critical Analysis; III. Opposing Arguments; IV. Alternatives and Conclusions.

**I. Theory and Principles of Democracy**

1. 5/15 Introduction to the Course  
  
American Democracy in History, Theory, and Practice
2. 5/17 American Democracy Today  
  
“American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality,” Report of the American Political Science Association  
  
“Toward a Political Science of Citizenship,” in *Democracy at Risk*, chapter 1
3. 5/22 Constitutionalism and American Democracy  
  
*Federalist Papers*, 10, 15, 49, 51, 55,  
  
Anti-Federalist Papers: selections  
  
Thomas Jefferson, Selected Letters

4. 5/24 Classical Theories of Democracy

Alexis de Tocqueville, selections from *Democracy in America*

Joseph Schumpeter, "Another Theory of Democracy," from *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*

J.S. Mill, selection from *Considerations on Representative Government*

5. 5/29 Contemporary Theories of American Democracy

Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy"

Benjamin Barber, "Citizenship and Community"

Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference"

**Reading Quiz #1**

**II. Problems in American Democracy**

6. 5/31 Elections

"National Electoral Processes," *Democracy at Risk*, chapter 2

**\* Research Proposal/Presentations Due**

7. 6/5 **Marriott Library Research Session**

- Conducting Advanced Political Science Research
- Keys to Good Writing in Political Science

8. 6/7 The Urban Setting of American Democracy

"The American Metropolis," *Democracy at Risk*, chapter 3

9. 6/12 Public Associations and Civic Participation

“Associational Life and the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sector,” *Democracy at Risk*, chapter 4

**Reading Quiz #2**

**III. Opposing Voices**

10. 6/14 Why Democracy? *Redux*

Morris Fiorina, “Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement”

John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, “Americans’ Desire for Stealth Democracy,” from *Stealth Democracy*

Richard Ellis, “In the Name of the People,” from *Democratic Delusions*

**\* Literature Review Due**

**IV. Alternatives and Conclusions**

11. 6/19 Alternatives and Responses

“Conclusion: Assessing Our Political Science of Citizenship,” *Democracy at Risk*, chapter 5

Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin, “Deliberation Day”

12. 6/21 Final Class Session: **Rough Draft Due**

In-Class Writing Workshop: **Please be sure to bring three copies of your rough draft, and a self-addressed stamped manila-envelope.**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE: 12:00 p.m., August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006** (Be sure to submit a self-addressed stamped envelope with your final paper.)