
PHI 335: Philosophy and Democracy

Instructor: Kelly Parker

Syllabus Fall 2004

Section A: Tues/Thurs, 11:30am–12:45pm

Contact

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Office Hours: Mon 9–11,
Tue 10:30–11:30,
Thu 1–2
and by arrangement

Orientation

John Dewey wrote that "the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy" (*The Public and Its Problems*, 1927). This course is designed for students and citizens who wish to become more familiar with

1. the historical development of the concept of democracy,
2. the main "ailments" that some believe afflict democracies, and
3. the major contemporary accounts of the aims, values, and functions (perhaps curative) of contemporary liberal democracy.

As a *philosophy* course, our energies will be primarily directed toward the critical examination of concepts and beliefs that are central to theories of democracy as a preferred form of political arrangement. The aim of such critical inquiry is to attain a more refined and clear understanding of these crucial concepts.

As a course about *democracy* (and as one that is significantly influenced by Dewey's and other pragmatists' views of democracy, knowledge, and education) our inquiry presumes that all participants will contribute. Individual contribution to the class takes various forms: preparing for informed participation in each class meeting, directly leading one class discussion, and working with the instructor and the other participants to shape certain aspects of the course content (especially "Topic V" and the Final Exam).

Texts

Christiano, Thomas. *Philosophy and Democracy: An Anthology*. Oxford University Press, 2002. (*Required*)

Cunningham, Frank. *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge, 2003. (*Required*)

Gibaldi, Joseph and Phyllis Franklin. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Sixth edition. Modern Language Association of America, 2003. (*Recommended*)

PHI 335–A Course Pack. Available in University Bookstore. (*Required*)

Other materials will be made available in class as appropriate.

Assignments and Grading

- **Paper 1** 750 words on the basis for democracy. (15%)
- **Paper 2** 1000 words on the value of democracy. (15%)
- **In-class presentation/discussion** Conducted by 2-person teams, ongoing through weeks 3–13. (15%)
- **Research paper proposal and bibliography** 1 page proposal for research project, with 12–15 item MLA format bibliography. (10%)
- **Research paper** 3000–3500 words on chosen topic. (25%)
- **Final Exam** (20%)

Attendance

The success of this class depends largely on in-class participation. You are expected to be here on time, prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. The equivalent of one week's absences will be tolerated without penalty. Each absence beyond that is the basis for a penalty, to be deducted from your final grade.

2 class periods missed – no penalty

3–5 class periods missed – 3% deduction from semester grade for each class

More than 5 classes missed – No Credit (F)

Grade Definitions

[**A**] **Outstanding.** Work displays thorough mastery of material, exceptionally good writing, and genuine engagement with the subject-matter. This grade is reserved for those students who attain the highest levels of excellence in thought and scholarship.

[**B**] **Good.** Work displays accurate understanding of the material, writing is clear and free of mechanical errors.

[**C**] **Fair.** Work displays basic grasp of material, though there may be the occasional misunderstanding or inaccuracy. Writing quality acceptable.

[D] **Marginal.** Work displays a grasp of the material adequate for credit, but quality of work indicates lack of effort or aptitude.

[F] **Unacceptable.** Excessive absences, assignments not completed, or assignments unworthy of credit. Cheating or plagiarism will earn an automatic F for the assignment and/or the course.

Papers

Papers should be proofread, printed in a readable dark print, double-spaced, and have numbered pages. Cover sheets and external binders are unnecessary and wasteful—please don't use them. Include your name, the course number and section, date, and the assignment name or title on the first page. A paper encumbered by excessive spelling, grammatical, punctuation, and/or documentation errors will not receive a grade higher than C-, regardless of whatever other merits the paper may have.

It is best to turn in papers in class. If this is not possible, papers may be turned in at 213 Lake Superior Hall. Papers received after the announced deadline will not be graded except when the paper is late due to genuine emergency.

Special Note on Proper Citation of Sources and Plagiarism

"Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism" (*GVSU Student Code*, Sec 223.01). There is such a thing as unintentional plagiarism. It results from ignorance of proper citation practices, but is nonetheless a violation of academic standards and will not be tolerated.

In general, any use of words or ideas that one obtains from a specific source requires a citation of that source. Citations may take the form of footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references. Whatever its form, a citation identifies the author, title, date and other bibliographic information for the work cited, and identifies where in the source the referenced information appears.

All citations and lists of works consulted should follow the guidelines in *The MLA Handbook*. The handbook is available in the bookstore and at good libraries everywhere; see the GVSU Library website or the course website for online guides to MLA style.

Topics and Readings

I. Introduction and Overview of Political Philosophy (2 wks)

- ◆ Article: "History of Political Philosophy," Hobbes, Rousseau, Aristotle
- ### II. Survey: *Theories of Democracy* (4 wks)

- ◆ Cunningham

III. Contemporary Views of Democracy and Philosophy (3 wks)

- ◆ Selected essays from Christiano; Rawls
- ### IV. Pragmatism and Democracy (3 wks)

- ◆ Bernstein, classical pragmatists, Habermas, Rorty, Stout
- ### V. Current Issues of Democracy (2 wks)

- ◆ Topic and readings to be determined by participants. *Possible topics:* Religious Tradition and Liberal Democracy, Globalization, Gender and/or Race, Technology, Environment, U.S. Involvement in Iraq, Terrorism, Analysis of November 2004 Elections.

Important Dates

Add/Drop Period Ends	Sept. 3, 5pm	Paper 1 Due	September 16
Labor Day Recess	Sept. 5-7	Paper 2 Due	October 14
Drop (75% Tuition Refund)	Sept. 24, 5pm	Research Proposal Due	November 14
Withdrawal Deadline	Oct. 22, 5 pm	Research Paper Due	November 30
Thanksgiving Recess	Nov. 24-28	Final Exam	Wed. Dec. 15, 12-1:50pm

General Education Program Information

The Democracy Theme

This course is part of the General Education "Democracy" Theme. Following is additional information to assist you in deciding whether you would like to choose this theme to fulfill your general education thematic requirement.

The Theme and its Purpose

The historical roots of democracy extend to ancient Greece, but only since the mid-eighteenth century has it become a principle embraced by the masses and capable of sparking revolution. Moreover, what we think democracy means today in the United States often bears little resemblance to what it has meant in the past

and what it currently means for other peoples around the globe. In fact, one might argue that Americans in the twenty-first century take democracy for granted and have little clear idea of what it entails or how it has shaped their politics, educational institutions, social relations, cultural values, economic practices, and legal system. These charges will not apply to students choosing the Democracy theme, which explores the meanings of democracy and its far-ranging and often unanticipated consequences from various points of view.

The Theme Objectives

1. To explore the various definitions and concepts of democracies.
2. To examine the role of the individual in democracies.
3. To analyze the societal institutions that embody democratic ideals, for example, legal, economic, civic, scientific, and educational institutions.

Skills Objectives

All courses in a Thematic Group use teaching methods that help students become more proficient in the following skills:

1. To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking and writing;
2. To think critically and creatively;
3. To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively;
4. To integrate areas of knowledge and view ideas from multiple perspectives.

Linkages Between the Theme Courses

1. A common reading assignment (e.g., John Dewey, "Creative Democracy – The Task Before Us", 1930) will be used to link the courses within the students' experience. The reading may vary periodically, but it would serve as the basis for a discussion in each of the theme courses.
2. A common event or events will be held each semester, organized by students and faculty participating in the theme. Such events might include a forum on a timely public issue relevant to the theme, a public speaker, theme panels at Student Scholarship Day, etc. All students enrolled in a theme course that semester would be required to attend.

Courses in the Theme

Note: To meet your theme requirement, you must select three courses from three disciplines. You cannot get theme credit for both political science courses.

ECO 365: Comparative Economic Systems

Relative to such economic goals as economic freedom, consumer welfare, the equitable distribution of income, full employment, efficiency, growth,

and security, how well do alternative political-economic systems perform? This course studies contemporary evolving capitalist, communist, and post-communist systems in either East Asia, Europe, or Latin America. Prerequisite: ECO 200 or 210.

HST 318: History of Democracy in America

Examines the historical development of democratic principles, ideologies, and practices in American history. Focuses on the range and limits of democracy in American History, debates among Americans over democracy and the practice of democracy in a variety of areas, including parties, voting, citizenship, and the presidency. Prerequisite: Completion of Historical Perspectives Category or junior standing.

PHI 335: Philosophy and Democracy

Explores the idea of democracy within the context of a major philosophical tradition., Investigates the concept of democracy in such areas as social and political thought, educational theory, aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of science and philosophy of religion.

PLS 306: American Constitutional Law I

This course examines the constitutional foundations of the power relationship between the federal government and the states, among the three branches of the federal government, and between the government and the individual, with special emphasis given to the role of the Supreme Court in a democratic political system. Prerequisites: PLS 102 or Junior Standing.

PLS 339: Comparative Democratization

Seminar course assesses the theories and approaches used to explain the comparative politics of democratization. Focuses on democratic transition, consolidation, the social and institutional bases of democracy, and the role of individual choices in shaping democracy. Examines case studies of democratization in East Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Prerequisites: PLS 103 or any comparative politics course or Junior Standing.

MTH 330: The Mathematics of Voting and Elections

A study of voting, elections, and social choice from within the framework of mathematical modeling and problem solving. Topics include models of voter preference, election procedures, voting paradoxes, impossibly theorems, power indices and referendum elections. Prerequisites: MTH 110, WRT 150, and completion of the Mathematical Sciences Foundation.