

Democratic Political Thought

Political Science 262

Fall 2004

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This course is an introduction to selected topics in democratic political theory. Using the writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, you will be asked to explore, clarify and reflect on important themes found in modern political thought. The main purpose of this course is to provide students with an understanding of classical contract theory, insights into the roots of modern democratic theory and an understanding of basic vices and virtues of liberalism.

Course Content

This class introduces students to contractarian theories of politics beginning with Thomas Hobbes. Contractarians focus mainly on the question, ‘what justifies government and law?’. In other words, what is (or ought to be) the source of political authority in society? Contractarian answers to this question suggest that an original contract between individuals in the society justifies government and law. The exact nature and meaning of this contract differ substantially among contract theorists, and in this class we intend to explore these differences in considerable detail.

After exploring the views of several contract theorists on democracy, we focus on criticisms and problems with liberal views of democracy. Some of these problems involve theoretical problems or paradoxes associated with democracy while others involve more empirically minded difficulties. However we are not strictly concerned with criticisms alone. We finish the course looking at a set of more modern papers on the virtues of democratic government. Investigating classical perspectives on liberalism, problems of liberalism and the virtue of democratic rule will provide you with a very thorough, broad-based introduction to democratic thought.

Course Goals

The main purpose of this class is to give you a perspective on modern democratic theory from a liberal perspective. I expect you to communicate your familiarity with (and opinions on) course readings both formally and informally during the semester. I also expect you to demonstrate your analytical capacities and writing skills in short papers.

The questions we deal with in this class are some of the most interesting and most debated philosophical questions in Western Thought. What motivates human nature? Why should citizens create institutions for the regulation of social behaviors? What is the foundation for legitimate government? Under what conditions is democratic rule legitimate? Why is it better than other kinds of rule? What form of democratic government best expresses the desires of the people? What are the benefits or costs associated with such systems?

Although these questions are very difficult to answer, hard work will yield considerable dividends. You will see connections between classical debates about democracy and current debates about policy in the United States. You will also gain deep insights into the functioning of government from a foundational democratic perspective. I encourage you to explore these connections in greater detail in the class or later in your St. Mary’s projects.

I. GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Lectures, Discussions and Class Presentations

Investigating political theory requires careful reading of the text, a sustained commitment to hard work and careful discussion of ideas. For this reason attendance in class is mandatory. Although there will be a lecture component to the class, individual participation in the class is critical for developing a collective perspective on various topics. As an incentive to complete the reading assignments and participate in class discussions, you will be graded at the midterm and at the end of the semester for the quantity and quality of your class contributions. Participation is worth 20% of your grade.

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Class Discussion	20%
Short Reports	40%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Short Discussion Reports

You will be asked to complete several *short papers* on topics related to the readings in the class. These papers should be concise, focused papers based on an important question raised in the text. Questions and instructions for the papers will be distributed in class approximately one week prior to the due date. These papers will not require additional research. Because they are designed to facilitate class discussion, they are due before class meets. These papers are worth 40% of your grade.

Midterm and Final Examinations

There will be a midterm exam and final exam in this class. The final exam will be a take home exam distributed the week before the final exam date. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your grade and the final exam is worth 20% of your grade.

Office Hours and Other Contact

Mike's office is in Kent Hall, Room 211. My office hours are Monday and Wednesday 4:30-5:30p. If you cannot make these office hours, you can always make an appointment with me for another time. You can also reach me by e-mail during the week if you need some quick feedback. On Mondays and Wednesdays I would be glad to get some lunch with you to talk about political philosophy. I strongly encourage you to speak with me outside of class. We can discuss your work, your research ideas, my work, or your ideas about politics.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are available at ST. MARY'S CAMPUS STORE. You may, if you wish, purchase these books. However, the *World Wide Web* has many different copies of these books that you can download or read on-line.

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997, Flathman and Johnston eds.
2. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government Student edition* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) Peter Laslett, Raymond Geuss, Quentin Skinner eds.
3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On The Social Contract* in Rousseau's Political Writing, New York: W.W. Norton, 1988.
4. Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*, Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2004
5. St. Mary's College, Posc 262.01, Blackboard Reserves (Indicated by *e-r* below).

III. TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Preliminaries

A. *The Method of Logical Argumentation*

1. Garth Kemerling, [Logic](#), “Logical Argument and Language and Logic,” 1999. *Web*
2. Salmon, Logic, “The Scope of Logic,” Chapter 1. p.1-18. *e-r*

B. *History and Divine Order*

1. Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, [The Divine Right of Kings](#). *Web*
2. King James , The True Lawe of Free Monarchies. *Web*

2. A Liberal Justification for Government: History versus Reason

A. *Human Nature and Reason*

1. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction. Part 1 - Ch. 1; 2: to “Memory”; Ch. 3: to “Remembrance”; Ch. 6: to “Hope” and from “Deliberation” to end of chapter; Ch. 8 through the first paragraph of “Good wit” and from “Prudence” to “Rage”; Ch. 10 to “Dignity”; Ch. 11 to “Love of Virtue”.
2. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hobbes, Ch. 13; Ch. 14: to “Free gift” and from “Covenants of mutual trust” to the end; Ch. 15 to “Justice of Men & ...” and “The laws of nature oblige ...” to end; Part II : Chapter 17; Ch. 18; Ch. 21.
3. Sir Robert Filmer, sections from *Observations Concerning the Original of Government*, in *Leviathan* (1997) pp, 271-277.

Film: Apocalypse Now!

3. Liberal Justifications for Democratic Government

A. *The State of Nature and Contracts Revisited*

1. Locke, [The Second Treatise of Government](#). Chapters I-VI; Chapter VII paragraphs 86-94; Chapter VIII paragraphs 95-107; paragraphs 112-121. *Web*
2. Locke, [The Second Treatise of Government](#). Chapters IX-XIV; Chapter XIX.

B. *Realism and the State of Nature*

1. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Preface; First Part to page 21; p.25-Second Part.

C. *Toward Moral Contracts*

1. Rousseau, [On The Social Contract](#). Book I, Chapters I-IV. *Web*
2. Rousseau, [On The Social Contract](#). Book I, Chapters V-VIII; Book II, Chapter I-IV; Book III, Chapters IX-XVIII; Book IV, Chapter I.

D. *Liberal Democracy in Perspective*

1. Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, 1962. Introduction, Chapter 1; part 1A, Chapters 1 & 2 part IIB, Chapter 2; Part VI, Chapters 1, 2, and 4. *e-r*
2. Schumpeter, Joseph *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (Harper Torchbook, 1942) Part IV. *e-r*
3. Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*, Ch. 1-6.

4. **Problems of Democracy and Democratic Thought**

A. *Paradoxes of Democracy*

1. Lijpart, Arend. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 91, No.1, March 1997. *e-r**
2. Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics*, "Group Choice," Chapters 3 and 4. *e-r*

B. *The Value of Democracy*

1. Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," *American Political Science Review* September 1993. *e-r**
2. Sen, Amartya. "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10.3 (1999). *e-r**
3. Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3. (Sep., 1993), pp. 624-638. *e-r**

Rebellion, Conflict and Chaos in Literature
<i>Ryszard Kapuscinski. The Emperor. Vintage International, Random House Publishers, 1983</i>
<i>Philip Gourevitch. We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.</i>
<i>Chinua Achebe. A Man of the People. Anchor Books, 1966.</i>
<i>Timothy Garton Ash. The File: A Personal History, 1998.</i>
<i>Joseph Conrad. Heart of Darkness, Harper Brothers, 1910.</i>