ISS 1684: What is Democracy?

Quest 1: Justice and Power

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2025
- Required 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- MWF, 11:45 am - 12:35 pm
- CSE 0453

Instructor

- Adam Lebovitz
- CSE E548
- Office hours: Mondays 1-5 pm
- adamlebovitz@ufl.edu
- 352.294.7827

If you need to schedule an appointment outside of office hours, please email the course instructor.

Course Description

Few terms enjoy broader acceptance today than "democracy." In the United States, it is commonly spoken of as our highest civic ideal, often accompanied by warnings that it is "under threat." Internationally it is often taken as a byword for legitimacy, so that even the most authoritarian governments claim publicly to be democracies, often going so far as to hold dubious elections to further the illusion. The nearly unanimous approval accorded to "democracy" today makes it easy to forget that, for several millennia, it was one of the most controversial terms in politics, frequently used as an epithet to describe anarchy and mob rule. The self-identification of most governments today as "democracies" also occludes the fact that, over the past 2500 years, this word has undergone several notable somersaults in meaning. It is unlikely that the Greeks, for example, would describe the present-day United States as a democracy, given its near-total reliance on elected representatives to craft and enforce its laws. But perhaps the greatest complication in invoking democracy today is that few theorists can agree on the word's meaning. Does it signify direct rule by the people in a massive assembly? Rule by elected representatives? A social system in which all individuals enjoy equal status, regardless of race, religion, or gender? Rule by (or in the interest of) the many poor? While the meanings assigned to "democracy" have shifted dramatically over time, this charged word

has always been a vehicle for working out our highest ideals, and our darkest fears, in the realm of politics.

This course traces the changing ideal of "democracy" from ancient Athens to the present day, drawing on classic works by Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Marx, and Arendt. It studies the development of this idea over time, and charts the dizzying variety of meanings that have been assigned to it, while also engaging with the arguments of its sharpest and most perceptive critics. Students will leave the course with a wide understanding of the history of democracy, a deep familiarity with the positions of its leading advocates and critics, and a set of tools for thinking carefully and critically about democracy in the present.

Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

This course accomplishes the Quest and General Education objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Required Readings and Works

- Required Readings:
    1. John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2018)
- Additional *required* readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas.
- The writing manual for this course is: *The Economist Style Guide*, 11th edn. (2015). ISBN: 9781610395755. This is available as a PDF on Canvas.
- Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. **Active Participation and Attendance:** 20%
    a. **Participation:** 10%
        i. An exemplary participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)
    b. **Class Attendance:** 10%
        i. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. Class attendance will be recorded daily. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty.
        ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.

2. **Experiential Learning Component: Film Screening:** 15%
    a. Over the course of the semester, the instructor will arrange for the screening of three films that reflect the themes of the course. Drinks and snacks will be provided.
    b. Students are welcome to attend all three screenings; attendance at *one* of them is mandatory.
    c. After watching the film, students participate in a 45 minute discussion about its themes, held in the screening room. They will then be asked to write a 500 word reflection, relating the film to the themes of the course. At least *one assigned text*, besides the film, must be discussed and quoted in the essay. This essay is due no later than **December 1 at 11:59 pm**, but you are encouraged to write and submit it shortly after the screening.

3. **Reading Quizzes:** 15%
    a. Reading quizzes will be administered on the start of class on Fridays, at given times throughout the semester. Quizzes will test the students' knowledge of the week's readings, and will contain short answer, short essay, and/or multiple-choice questions.
    b. Weeks 3, 5, 9, 11, 13.

4. **Midterm:** 20%
    a. Students will take an in-class, written midterm examination during Week 7. It will consist of essay and short answer questions.

5. **Final Paper:** 30%

a. You will submit an essay on the themes of the course. The instructor will supply a list of potential questions to answer, though you are also welcome to frame your own question. The length is 1,500 words *minimum* and 2,500 words *maximum*, exclusive of notes. Your essay must incorporate at least three course readings. No additional reading or research is expected. All students are required to submit a 250 word summary and outline of their argument on **November 3** at **11:59 pm** for instructor approval. The abstract is ungraded, but failure to turn it in on time will result in a deduction of up to 5 points from the grade of the final paper. The instructor will provide written feedback on the abstract, as well as the completed paper. See Canvas for details and grading rubric. (R)
b. The essay must be clearly organized, demonstrate critical thinking, and integrate central ideas from the course.
c. The due date for the paper is **December 8** at **11:59 pm**
d. Professor will evaluate and provide written feedback, on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
e. You may want to access the university's Writing Studio.
f. An additional writing guide website can be found at OWL.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION (FRIDAY, AUGUST 22)

WEEK 2: ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY: FOUNDATIONS (AUGUST 25-27-29)

The word 'democracy' was coined in Athens to describe a new political order that crystallized at the end of the sixth century BCE, in which all essential decisions were made by citizens and their elected magistrates. Athenian democracy attracted an enormous amount of attention, positive and negative, in its own time. It was praised by many observers for the freedom, equality, and political agency that it made possible; it was criticized by many others as amounting to little better than mob rule. These debates have lost little of their salience in the intervening 2500 years, even if our modern ideas about 'democracy' differ from the Athenian model in significant ways.

This week we will consider four readings that illustrate how leading Athenians thought about their own democracy—its moral and theoretical underpinnings, its unique advantages, and its points of frailty. Some of these texts are by defenders of Athenian democracy (Demosthenes), but most are by critics (Thucydides, Pseudo-Xenophon, Plato), who nevertheless understood that, whatever its faults, this system came with real and distinctive advantages.

Taken together, these four texts underscore the values that Athenians thought their democracy exemplified, including individual liberty, civic equality, the rule of law, and military greatness. These readings also raise the difficult question of how a regime founded on the principle of civic equality should relate to elites, those possessing some special distinction, privileges, or set of abilities. What must it do to contain the threat they pose, and how can it harness their skills and ambitions for the public good?

Readings (44 pages):

1. M: Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (c. 400 BCE), *The Landmark Thucydides* Richard Crawley trans., Richard B. Strassler ed. (New York, 1998), Book 2.34-46 (pages 110-118).
2. W: Pseudo-Xenophon, "The Constitution of the Athenians" (c. 435 BCE), *Hiero. Agesilaus. Constitution of the Lacedaemonians. Ways and Means. Cavalry Commander. Art of Horsemanship. On Hunting. Constitution of the Athenians.*, E.C. Marchant trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1984), pp. 475-507.
3. W: Plato, *Protagoras* (c. 370 BCE), *Plato: Collected Dialogues*, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns eds. (New York, 1961), 320c-323a (pages 318-20).
4. F: Demosthenes, *First Philippic* (351 BCE), *Orations I*, J.H. Vince trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1929), pp. 69-99.

WEEK 3: ARISTOPHANES (SEPTEMBER 3-5)

Last week we considered four defenses of Athenian democracy, though as we saw, these defenses could very often look like harsh critiques. These were all political speeches, though it is not clear that most of them were given in anything like their recorded form, and several of them have clearly been substantially reinvented and recreated in literary texts.

This week we will be reading *The Knights*, by the Athenian playwright Aristophanes (446-386 BCE)—first performed in 424 BCE, just a few years after Pericles delivered his funeral oration. Aristophanes was always a political writer, and *The Knights* is his most direct effort to address, and to mock, the failings of Athenian democracy. The play reinforces many of the themes that we will have considered last week—the relationship between democracy and free speech, the dangers of tyranny of the majority, and the manipulability of democratic publics by self-interested actors claiming to represent their interests. Though it is a play rather than a political treatise, we will take its ideas about democracy very seriously indeed.

Readings (92 pages):

1. M & W: Aristophanes, *The Knights* (424 BCE), *Aristophanes I: Acharnians Knights*, Jeffrey Henderson trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1998), pp. 220-405.

Assignments: Friday, September 5: Reading Quiz #1

WEEK 4: PLATO (SEP. 8-10-12)

Athenian democracy had few critics more brilliant, or influential, than Plato (428-348 BCE), who saw his teacher, Socrates, condemned to death by the Assembly in 399 BCE, and who elaborated in his works a powerful philosophical challenge to the legitimacy of democracy. This critique is articulated in many of Plato's works, but nowhere with such lucidity as in his *Republic*. The work as a whole is one of the most significant statements about politics, and one of the sharpest critiques of democracy, ever written. But we will content ourselves with reading two important sections—Book VII, setting out the allegory of the cave, and Book VIII, discussing the cycle of constitutions. Book VII explains what knowledge is, how it differs from opinion, and why access to true knowledge will always be the province of a small and special sect of men, known as philosophers. One significant fault of democracy is that it empowers the mob, rather than these men, with their special training and access to the truth.

We will then turn to Book VIII, in which Plato discusses actually-existing constitutions, and enumerates their faults. He has many critical things to say about democracy, which does not empower the wisest, or the most moral, or the most temperate. But it is just as interesting to read Book VIII for its *praise* of democracy, and the special freedoms and pleasures that it makes possible, which no other form of government can duplicate.

Readings (52 pages):

1. Plato, *The Republic* (c.370 BCE), in *Collected Dialogues*
    - M: Book VII (pages 747-772).
    - W & F: Book VIII (pages 772-798).

First Film Screening: *Man With a Movie Camera* (dir. Vertov, USSR, 1929)

WEEK 5: ARISTOTLE (SEP. 15-17-19)

As Plato's most brilliant student, Aristotle (384-322 BCE), Aristotle was hardly like to be a passionate defender of Athenian democracy. Indeed, because he was not born in Athens—he was from the Greek city of Stagira—he remained a resident alien, and had no right to take part in assemblies, juries, or other civic functions. For all that, Aristotle offered a more moderate theory of politics than the what Plato put forward. He denigrated direct democracy as little better than mob rule, but he argued that what he called a *politeia*—a free government that took the popular will as its base, but channeled it through a variety of different institutions, and made room for true leadership and not just demagoguery—might amount to the best of all the forms of government. Aristotle's account would massively influence the theories of constitutional democracy that arose in the early modern period.

Readings (52 pages):

1. Aristotle, *Politics*, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, Stephen Everson ed. (Cambridge, 1996)
    - M: Book III.6-18 (pages 69-91).
    - W: Book IV.4-13 (pages 95-110).
    - F: Book V.1, 4-5, 8 (pages 119-21, 125-29, 134-37).

Assignments: Friday, September 5: Reading Quiz #2

WEEK 6: ROUSSEAU (SEP. 22-24-26)

The Genevan-born Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-` 1778) was one of the most celebrated writers of Europe's Age of Enlightenment. He won fame for his art criticism, his best-selling novels and memoirs, his writings on education, and his musical compositions, but he is best remembered today for his pathbreaking works of social and political theory. His 1762 *Social Contract*, an exploration of the history and theory of popular sovereignty, deeply impressed its readers with its ambitious effort to translate the idea of ancient democracy into the modern world. It was widely praised, and provided crucial inspiration for the democratic revolutions that followed its publication in Europe and North America. This week we will read the first half of the *Social Contract*, which sets out a number of ideas that would prove fundamental to future thinking about democracy. These included the tension between self-rule and representation, the difference between democracy and popular sovereignty, and the link between civic equality and equality of property. And we will devote considerable time to making sense of Rousseau's enigmatic idea of the "General Will."

Readings (78 pages):

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (1762), Donald A. Cress trans. (Indianapolis, 2019)
    - M: Foreword, Book I, 1-18.
    - W: Book II, 19-44.
    - F: Book III, 45-78.

WEEK 7: PUBLIUS (SEP. 29, OCT. 1, 3)

In a 1777 letter, a twenty-year old Alexander Hamilton (1757-1802), already recognized as one of the leading politicians and writers of the American Revolution, coined an evocative new phrase to describe his preferred form of government: 'representative democracy'. Today this phrase is a standard part of our political lexicon, but it would have seemed paradoxical to those familiar with the democracies of the ancient world, whose overarching principle was direct rule by the people.

If we want to understand how "democracy" came to mean something resembling our present-day political order, in which power is entrusted almost exclusively to elected representatives, we should turn to the *Federalist* essays that Hamilton wrote, with James Madison (1751-1836), to promote ratification of the Constitution, in 1787-88. These essays focus on four themes that are of particular interest to us in this course: (1) the reasons that democracy failed in the ancient world (2) whether a 'representative' government should resemble the people, or simply be elected by them (3) the relationship between political liberty and military power (4) the relationship between free government and the rights of minorities, including, above all, the rights of wealthy owners of property. Can we call the political order that they envisioned a "democracy," even if they themselves would resist this term?

Readings (38 pages):

1. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist* (1788), George W. Carey and James McClellan eds. (Indianapolis, 2001).
    - M: Alexander Hamilton:
        - No. 1, pp. 1-4
        - No. 15, pp. 68-75
        - No. 35, pp. 167-72
        - No. 70, pp. 362-369
    - W: James Madison:
        - No. 10, pp. 42-49
        - No. 51, pp. 267-272

Assignment: Friday, Oct. 3: Midterm Examination

WEEK 8: GRACCHUS BABEUF (OCT. 6-8-10)

In May 1797, the activist François-Noël Babeuf (1760-97) was put to death for his role in the Conspiracy of Equals, a plan to seize control of Paris, and France, by provoking an uprising of the masses against the Directory, a centrist republican government that had come to power following the end of the Jacobin Reign of Terror (1793-94). Babeuf argued that, despite being elected, the Directory government was morally and politically bankrupt, because it had failed to take seriously the needs of poor and the working classes, allowing the supposedly "revolutionary" state to be run, in reality, by an aristocracy of bankers and landowners. Real freedom, he argued, was not primarily a question voting, or civil liberties, but civic and economic *equality*. While his opponents talked about "representative government," or the "republic," Babeuf talked about "democracy," his name for rule by—or perhaps, in the interests of—the people. His classical idea of freedom and democracy is signaled by his name: during the Revolution he rechristened himself "Gracchus," after the great popular tribune of the Roman Republic.

The Conspiracy of Equals did not intend to come to power through elections, but through violence, assassination, and revolution. Once in power, they would appoint a Committee of Public Safety to administer the state, and to unleash terror against those who stood in the path of real revolution. Real freedom, he argued—real *democracy*—could tolerate these violations of law and majoritarianism, at least temporarily, as long as the goal of substantive equality was kept in sight. In making this argument, and placing it under the banner of democracy, Babeuf set the template for centuries of radical politics.

Readings (65 pages):

1. *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf* (1797), John Anthony Scott ed. and trans. (New York, 1967).
    - M: 19-44
    - W: 44-69
    - F: 69-95

WEEK 9: TOCQUEVILLE: I (OCT. 13-15)

In 1831, the twenty-six year old aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) left France for a nine-month tour of the United States of America. On his return he wrote *Democracy in America*, a sprawling meditation on the 'democracy' that he encountered there, which he published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840.

Tocqueville made two observations about the nature of democracy in the modern world which will be at the heart of our discussion this week. First, democracy was best understood not as a political system but as a set of mores and norms, a reigning spirit of the age. The new democratic spirit emphasized the moral equality of all individuals and their equal entitlement to participate in the key institutions of society; it was not strictly a question of forms of government. Second, democracy was an unstoppable force: there was no possibility of reversing its tide, and thereby returning to an earlier age of feudal and aristocratic values. Europe, too, should expect to become 'democratic' in the manner of America. As you read, note what Tocqueville sees as the dangers introduced by this new political order, above all what he calls 'tyranny of the majority', and what safeguards he thinks are necessary to counteract them.

Readings (58 pages):

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/40), Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop trans. and ed. (Chicago, 2002).
    - M: Introduction, pp. 3-15.
    - W: Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 1, pp. 165-66, Chapters 6-8, pp. 220-64.

WEEK 10: TOCQUEVILLE: II (OCT. 21-23-25)

The first volume of *Democracy in America* made Tocqueville an instant celebrity when it was published in 1835. He then turned his attention to producing a second volume, integrating the notes from his voyage to America with his prodigious reading on the history and theory of free government, and his observation of European politics. 'The first book', he wrote in a note to himself, was 'more American than democratic. This one [will be] more democratic than American'. It is also notably more pessimistic; if Tocqueville had always harbored fears about the pathological political forms that democracy might bring to the surface, in the second volume these increasingly occupied the foreground.

The sources of disquiet we will consider this week include the emergence of a new 'industrial' aristocracy, the centralization of political power, and the pathological fixation on equality at the expense of liberty. These anxieties converge in the last two chapters of *Democracy in America*, where Tocqueville asks whether democracy may in fact be generating new forms of despotism, more terrible and dispiriting than any known before. What resources does Tocqueville identify in the American tradition that he thinks might serve as an antidote to these destructive tendencies?

Readings (55 pages):

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/40), Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop trans. and ed. (Chicago, 2002).
    - M: Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 1-2, pp. 479-84
    - M: Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 5, pp. 489-93.
    - M: Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 7-8, pp. 496-504.
    - W: Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 16, pp. 521-22.
    - W: Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 20, pp. 530-32.
    - W: Volume 2, Part 3, Chapter 26, pp. 631-38.
    - F: Volume 2, Part 4, Chapter 3, pp. 643-46.
    - F: Volume 2, Part 4, Chapters 6-8, pp. 661-676.

Assignments: Friday, October 25: Reading Quiz #3

Second Film Screening: *La Marseillaise* (dir. Renoir, France, 1938)

WEEK 11: MARX AND ENGELS (OCT. 27-29-31)

Here is evidence of the long shadow of Babeuf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels delineated a political and economic program they called 'communism', which inspired a series of revolutions across Europe, beginning with the German uprisings of 1848 in which they participated, and culminating with the Russian Revolution of 1917, several decades after their respective deaths.

Today the legacy of communism is so bound up with Soviet dictatorship that it is difficult to recall that Marx and Engels often described themselves as 'democrats', and understood their controversial economic doctrines as the application of democratic principles to the realm of industrial production.

As you read these texts, ask yourself whether Marx and Engels had an abiding or merely a strategic commitment to political democracy, what they saw as flawed or deficient about the democracies of ancient Athens and revolutionary France, and whether carrying out the destruction of private property would necessitate authoritarian or anti-democratic forms of rule. Did their views on these questions shift over time?

Readings (65 pages):

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Robert C. Tucker ed. (2d. ed., New York, 1978).
    - M: Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's* Philosophy of Right: *Introduction* (1843), pp. 16-25
    - W: Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (1843), pp. 26-52.
    - F: Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), pp. 525-541
    - F: Friedrich Engels, *The Tactics of Social Democracy* (1895), 556-576

WEEK 12: SCHMITT (NOV. 3-5-7)

Twentieth-century democracy had few critics more perceptive than Carl Schmitt (1888-1895), a German law professor who enjoyed great prominence in the Weimar Republic before joining the Nazi party in 1933. He was arrested by the Allies in 1945, and banned from teaching, though he continued to write and comment prolifically until his death in 1985.

We will look at one of Schmitt's sharpest tracts—his *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* from 1923, including the new Preface he wrote for its second edition in 1926. On what grounds does Schmitt perceive a contradiction between liberalism, constitutionalism, and democracy? Why does he take issue with what he calls the values of "openness and discussion"? And would it be possible to imagine a democracy organized along lines Schmitt might approve of?

Readings (50 pages):

1. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923/26), trans. and ed. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA, 1985)
    - M: Preface and Introduction, pp. 1-21
    - W: Chapter 1, pp. 22-32
    - F: Chapter 2, pp. 33-50.

Assignment: Monday, November 3, 11:59 pm: 250 word abstract of final paper due

Assignment: Friday, November 7: Reading Quiz #4

WEEK 13: SCHUMPETER (NOV. 10-12-14)

Joseph Schumpeter was a gifted economist and Austrian émigré, who fled a teaching post in Germany in 1932 and taught economics at Harvard until his death in 1950. In 1943 he published *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy*, where he attacked the 'classical doctrine' of democracy as rule by the people and their representatives, in pursuit of the common good. This was highly unrealistic, he argued, since the people lacked the technical expertise necessary to have an informed opinion about questions such as foreign policy, or the proper rate of interest in central banks. To speak of the 'will of the people' in the face of this basic fact was to traffic in fiction. The true face of democracy, he urged, was a contest between elites, with specialized technical knowledge, to rule over the people with their own consent. It is often framed, for this reason, as a cynical and elitist picture of democracy. Are there, nevertheless, reasons to think that Schumpeter's theory of representative democracy makes greater space for values such as accountability than other, more idealistic accounts?

Readings (59 pages):

1. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy* (1943) (3d. ed., New York: Routledge, 1976)
    - M: pp. 243-64
    - W: pp. 264-83
    - F: pp. 284-302

WEEK 14: ARENDT (NOV. 17-19-21)

Hannah Arendt, a German émigré who arrived in the United States in 1941, made her reputation in 1951 with the publication of her philosophical history *Origins of Totalitarianism*, and thereafter enjoyed a number of prominent university posts in the United States, where she taught the history of political philosophy, until her death in 1975. More than any of her contemporaries in the United States or Europe, she was committed to reviving what she understood to be the positive legacy of Athenian democracy, retrofitting these ideas for a modern world of baffling technical complexity and existential stakes.

In her book *On Revolution*, published in 1963, she considered at length the lessons of the American and the French Revolutions, asking what insights might be mined from these experiences for a West gripped by uncertainty and self-doubt, and locked in a terrifying Cold War. We will consider the final chapter of this study, in which Arendt brings together the different threads of her study, and sketches some ways that the Greek experience of direct self-rule might be replicated in contemporary democracy. What supposedly 'Athenian' values is her system of direct democracy meant to preserve? Is her critique of representative democracy essentially Rousseauvean, or does she add some new element to the tradition?

Readings (67 pages):

1. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963) (New York: Penguin, 1990):
    - M: pp. 215-31
    - W: pp. 232-48
    - F: pp. 248-81

Assignment: Friday, November 21: Reading Quiz #5

Third Film Screening: *Nashville* (dir. Altman, USA, 1975)

WEEK 15: DUNN (DEC. 1-3)

We will conclude the semester with two chapters from John Dunn's recent account *Setting the People Free*. Dunn is a political theorist, based at the University of Cambridge, and *Setting the People Free* is his effort to think about the history of democracy, using many of the sources we have considered, as well as the future of this highly-charged idea. Chapter 3 is a historical investigation of the problem of equality in a market economy, which has bedeviled democracy since the eighteenth century. Is the gap between a political system that treats every citizen as equal, and an economic system that insists on sharp inequalities, too vast to be bridged. Chapter 4 thinks about the applicability of classic texts on democracy, by Plato, Rousseau, Schumpeter, and many others, to the problems that democracies now confront in the twenty-first century, and in particular problems that occupy a global scale. Are there reasons to fear that democracy's long reign as the cornerstone of political legitimacy now coming to an end?

Readings (67 pages):

1. John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2d. ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 95-162

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ESSAY DUE DECEMBER 1, 11:59 pm

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 8, 11:59 pm

IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see here.

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

A	Typically comes to class with pre-prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
B	Does not always come to class with pre-prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
C	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion.
D	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is an unwilling participant in discussion.
E	Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Refuses to participate in discussion.

Writing Rubric

	A	B	C	D	E
Thesis and Argumentation	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material.	There is neither a thesis nor any argument.
Use of Sources	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent.	Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent.
Organization	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.	The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence.
Grammar, mechanics and style	No errors.	A few errors.	Some errors.	Many errors.	Scores of errors.

Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

	A	B	C	D	E
Completeness	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely.	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Fails fully to answer the specific central question.	Does not answer the specific central question.
Analysis	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events.
Evidence	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task.	Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings.	Does not adduce any evidence.
Writing	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.	Incomprehensible organization and prose.

V. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest the General Education student learning outcomes for Humanities (H).

Humanities (H) Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine essential ideas about democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final analytical paper
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final analytical paper

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze the different definitions of "democracy" proposed over the millennia, and the flaws in each definition or conception of democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final analytical paper
- Analyze which critical or theoretical lenses are most appropriate to understand democracy in our own time. **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final essay

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: Canvas posts, final analytical paper
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on the nature of democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** active class participation

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessment:** experiential learning component, final analytical paper
- Reflect on the requirements of democratic citizenship in class discussion and written work (Quest 1). **Assessment:** active class participation, experiential learning component, final analytical paper

VI. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

During the semester, students will watch a film screening arranged by the course instructor outside of class time. There will be three film screenings in total; students will be responsible for attending *one*, participating in a discussion, and then writing a 500 word essay relating the film, its themes, and its formal techniques (cinematography, editing, narrative structure) to the larger themes and concerns of the course.

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Self-reflection is built into many of the assignments, primarily through the reading questions that students create, the analytic essay assignment, and the democracy experiential learning assignment. In these opportunities for self-reflection offered by specific activities throughout the course, students will reflect on the broader implications of the themes of the course, considering the impact to themselves and/or to a wider community.

VII. Required Policies

Academic Policies

All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found at https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies