Course description

This seminar examines the idea of democracy from a range of historical, normative and theoretical perspectives. Although it is not a comprehensive survey of democratic theory, the course seeks to expose students both to some of the classic debates in the history of democratic thought and to some influential contemporary works in democratic theory. Throughout the course, we will explore the authors’ answers to three questions that all theories of democracy implicitly or explicitly address:

1. What is “democracy”? (the definitional or semantic question)
2. What is democracy’s value? (the normative question)
3. What are the practices that are constitutive of democracy? (the institutional question)

As we will see, the institutional question is the point at which the normative foundations of democracy meet the empirical or descriptive claims about the contexts in which democracy is possible or desirable, and one of the goals of the course is to help you refine your skills at analytically distinguishing normative and empirical claims as they operate in a particular theory.

Our seminar unfolds at a moment when representative democracy as we know it in Western societies is undergoing significant disruption, even crisis. Although it is beyond the scope of the course to delve deeply into this crisis, my hope is that our studies will equip you with some theoretical tools that will help you to make sense of democracy’s current condition, its relationship to globalization, and its possible futures. To that end, the last two weeks of the course are dedicated to the themes of populism and ways of thinking about democracy that do not presuppose that its context is the territorially bounded state.

Course readings:

All course readings are available through Quercus or online through UofT Libraries.

Although they are not assigned texts, you may find the following overviews of democratic theory helpful:

For each week, I have added a number of suggested further readings to the required readings for the course. These are not meant to be exhaustive of the relevant literature for each theme – the literature in democratic theory is voluminous – but just to point you to some additional sources that might help to deepen your thinking about a particular set of debates. These suggested readings might be a good place to begin filling out your bibliography for your research paper. In some cases, I have added some “classics” that are not on the required reading list, and I have marked these texts with an asterisk.

Course requirements:

- Reading and participation. This is a reading-intensive course and you will need to adopt strategies for reading all of the assigned material before class. Each member of the seminar is expected to attend every class having carefully studied the readings and having read response essays on the Quercus portal. Active, informed, and thoughtful participation in class discussion, based on a thorough reading of the assigned works, will count for 20 percent of your mark in the course. Should you be unable to attend class because of illness, please let me know in advance, via the Quercus email facility.
- Response essays and presentations. Twice during the semester, each student will prepare a 2-page (500 word) critical response to the week’s readings and should be prepared to present a brief summary in class. These essays must be posted on the course portal no later than 6:00 PM the evening before class. Each essay will be worth 10 percent of your final mark, for a total of 20 percent. Late response essays will not be accepted.
- Term paper proposal. Due in class and on Quercus, February 10, 2020. Write a four-page (~ 1000 word) proposal for your term paper, stating your thesis question and including a bibliography of the main sources you will be relying upon. Your bibliography should be comprised of at least two or three major works from the syllabus, but should also include sources from the wider literature to which you have been guided through your research and through discussion with the professor. This proposal is worth 10 percent of your final mark. Late penalties will accrue at the rate of 1 percent per day, including weekends.
- Term papers, due by 6:00 PM on Friday, April 3, 2020, via turnitin.com. Undergraduate term papers should be 3750-5000 words in length; graduate papers should be 5000-6250 words. Papers should be written in 12-point type, double spaced. Make sure to use a standard style guide (MLA, Chicago) for references. The term paper is worth 50 percent of your final mark in the course. Late penalties will accrue at the rate of 1 percent per day, including weekends.

Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Please make sure you are familiar with the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). It is the
rule book for academic behaviour at UofT, and you are expected to know the rules. I take plagiarism very, very seriously.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the turnitin.com web site.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Course Readings

Week 1: Introduction
January 6, 2020


Suggestions for further reading:

Week 2: Ancient Democracy as a Model
January 13, 2020


Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 3: Representative democracy**  
**January 20, 2020**


Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 4: Plebiscitary democracy**  
**January 27, 2020**


Suggestions for further reading:
- *Joseph Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1943, esp. chapters 21-23).
Week 5: Pluralist democracy
February 3, 2020


Suggestions for further reading:

Week 6: Participatory democracy
February 10, 2020


Suggestions for further reading:

February 17, 2020: Reading Week; no class

Week 7: Deliberative democracy
February 24, 2020


Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 8: Inclusive democracy**
**March 3, 2020**

- Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 9: Agonistic democracy**
**March 10, 2020**


Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 10: Parties**
**March 17, 2020**

Suggestions for further reading:

**Week 11: Populism**
**March 24, 2020**

Suggestions for further reading:
- Nadia Urbinati, Populism and Despotism: An Interview with John Keane (June 26, 2018) (http://sydneydemocracynetwork.org/interview-professor-nadia-urbinati-on-populism-and-despotism/)

**Week 12: Democratic systems in a global age?**

**March 30, 2020**


Suggestions for further reading: