

POL484S/2026S
Democratic Theory
(Fall Term 2021)

Professor: Melissa S. Williams

Email: melissa.williams@utoronto.ca

Office hours: Wednesday, 2-4 PM, Sidney Smith Hall, Room 3040 or online

Seminar: Monday, 2-5 PM, Larkin Building, Room 340

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 and its possible futures.

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:

- Bernard Crick, *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (2nd ed.)(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).
- David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

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. The syllabus includes both some “classics” in 20th and 21st century democratic theory (marked with an asterisk) and important contemporary contributions to this vast literature.

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 on Quercus by 2:00 PM on Monday, October 25. Write a brief (800-1200 words) proposal for your term paper, stating your thesis question and including a bibliography of the main sources you will be relying upon (the bibliography is not included in the word limit). 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 11:59 PM on Thursday, December 9, via turnitin.com on the Quercus portal. Undergraduate term papers should be 3750-5000 words in length; graduate papers should be 5000-6250 words. Do not exceed the maximum word limit. Papers should be written in 12-point type, double spaced. Make sure to use a standard style guide (e.g., 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

September 13, 2021

- Mark E. Warren, "A Problem-Based Approach to Democratic Theory," *American Political Science Review* 111(1): 39-53 (2017).
- Elizabeth Anderson, "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value," in Thomas Christiano and John Christman, eds., *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 213-228.

Suggestions for further reading:

- Richard Arneson, "Democracy is Not Intrinsically Just," in Keith Dowding, Robert E. Goodin and Carole Pateman, eds. *Justice and Democracy*, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 40-58.
- Thomas Christiano, "Democracy," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006).

Week 2: Ancient Democracy as a Model

September 20, 2021

- Josiah Ober, *Demopolis: Democracy Before Liberalism in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Daniela Cammack, "The *Dēmos* in *Dēmokratia*," *The Classical Quarterly* 69(1): 42-61 (2019).
- Daniela Cammack, "The *Kratos* in *Dēmokratia*" (unpublished paper, 2020).
- Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophic Framework* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- Demetra Kasimis, "The Tragedy of Blood-Based Membership: Secrecy and the Politics of Immigration in Euripides's *Ion*," *Political Theory* 41(2): 231-256 (2013).
- Melissa Schwartzberg, "Aristotle and the Judgment of the Many: Equality, Not Collective Quality," *Journal of Politics* 78(3): 733-745 (2016).

- Jeremy Waldron, "The Wisdom of the Multitude: Some Reflections on Book 3, Chapter 11 of Aristotle's *Politics*," *Political Theory* 23(4): 563-584 (1995).

Week 3: Representative "democracy"

September 27, 2021

- *Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Lisa Disch, "Toward a Mobilization Conception of Political Representation," *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 100-114 (2011).
- Suzanne Dovi, "Political Representation," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2018)
- *Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
- Jane Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation," *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 515-528 (2003).
- Jane Mansbridge, "Recursive Representation in the Representative System," in Dario Castiglione and Johannes Pollak, eds., *Creating Political Presence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,).
- Andrew Rehfeld, "Toward a General Theory of Representation," *Journal of Politics* 68(1): 1-21 (2006).
- Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- Nadia Urbinati and Mark E. Warren, "The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 387-412 (2008).

Week 4: Pluralist democracy

October 4, 2021

- *Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (expanded edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Gerry Mackie, *Democracy Defended* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- *William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1982).
- Quentin Skinner, "The Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics: A Plague on Both Their Houses," *Political Theory* 1(3): 287-306 (1973).

**** October 11, 2021: No class (Thanksgiving Holiday)****

Week 5: Participatory democracy

October 18, 2021

- *Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), chs. 1, 2 & 6.
- Jane Mansbridge, "The Limits of Friendship," in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman, eds., *Participation in Politics* (New York: Lieber-Atherton, 1975).
- Jane Mansbridge, "Does Participation Make Better Citizens?" *The Good Society* 5(2): 4-7 (1995).
- Carole Pateman, "Participatory Democracy Revisited," *Perspectives on Politics* 10(1): 7-19 (2012).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Democracy for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- C. B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- *Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (2d ed.)(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

****October 25, 2021, 2:00 PM: Proposal due****

Week 6: Deliberative democracy

October 25, 2021

- Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," *Constellations* 1(1): 1-10 (1994).
- Jürgen Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," in James Bohman and William Rehg, eds., *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
- Simone Chambers, "The Philosophic Origins of Deliberative Ideals," in André Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark E. Warren, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Jane Mansbridge et al., "A Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy," in John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge, eds., *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Suggestions for further reading:

- André Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark E. Warren, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in *Democracy & Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in James Bohman and William Rehg, eds., *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
- John Dryzek, "Global Democratization: Soup, Society, or System?" *Ethics & International Affairs* 25(2): 211-234 (2011).

- Rainer Forst, "The Rule of Reasons: Three Models of Deliberative Democracy," *Ratio Juris* 14(1): 345-378 (2001).
- Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy & Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- *Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
- Cristina Lafont, *Democracy without Shortcuts: A Participatory Conception of Deliberative Democracy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Week 7: Inclusive democracy

November 1, 2021

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

Suggestions for further reading:

- Carol Gould, *Rethinking Democracy: Freedom and Social Cooperation in Politics, Economy and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- Clarissa Rile Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'," *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657 (1999).
- Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- Melissa S. Williams, *Voice, Trust and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

****November 8, 2021: No class (Reading Week)****

Week 8: Agonistic democracy

November 15, 2021

- Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism," *Social Research* 66(3): 745-758 (1999).
- Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," *Constellations* 1(1): 11-25 (1994).
- Bonnie Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory," *American Political Science Review* 101(1): 1-17 (2007).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1995).
- William Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- Mark Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Week 9: Race, Colonialism and Democracy

November 22, 2021

- Melvin L. Rogers, "Race, Domination, and Republicanism," in Danielle S. Allen and Rohini Somanathan (eds.), *Difference without Domination: Pursuing Justice in Diverse Democracies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
- Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018).
- Eddie S. Glaude, *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Broadway Books, 2016).
- Michael Hanchard, *The Spectre of Race: How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
- Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: Noonday, 1997).

Week 10: Parties

November 29, 2021

- Stuart White and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Russell Muirhead, *The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
- Nancy L. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro, *Responsible Parties: Saving Democracy from Itself* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

Week 11: Populism, Truth, and Democracy

December 6, 2021

- Nancy L. Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead, *A Lot of People are Saying* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Andrew Arato, "Political Theology and Populism," *Social Research* 80(1): 143-72 (2013).
- Margaret Canovan, *The People* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).
- Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

- Cass Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda," *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13): 1667-1693 (2018).
- Jan Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
- Paul Taggart, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser and Paulina Ochoa Espejo, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- Nadia Urbinati, *Me, the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).
- Nadia Urbinati, Populism and Despotism: An Interview with John Keane (June 26, 2018) (<http://sydneydemocracynetwork.org/interview-professor-nadia-urbinati-on-populism-and-despotism/>)
- Nadia Urbinati, "Political Theory of Populism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22(6): 1-17 (2019).

Week 12: Bringing the Lot Back In?

December 9, 2021 ("Make-up Monday")

- Hélène Landemore, *Open Democracy: Reinventing Democracy for the 21st Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Suggestions for further reading:

- Arash Abizadeh, "Representation, Bicameralism, Political Equality, and Sortition: Reconstituting the Second Chamber as a Randomly Selected Assembly," *Perspectives on Politics* 1-16 (2020).
- John Gastil and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), *Legislature by Lot: Transformative Designs for Deliberative Governance* (London: Verso, 2019).
- Yves Sintomer, "From Deliberative to Radical Democracy? Sortition and Politics in the 21st Century," *Politics & Society* 46(3): 337-357 (2018).

****December 9, 11:59 PM – Final paper due****