GOVT 101
Democratic Theory and Practice

George Mason University
Fall 2017

Basic Information

• Class Meets: Mondays, 4:30 pm—7:10 pm, Robinson B 208
• Professor: Jack A. Goldstone
• Office Hours: after class and by appointment
• Office: Founders Hall 607
• Email: jgoldsto@gmu.edu

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics, political science, and political theory that focuses on a definitive characteristic of modern political life: democracy. The idea of democracy is ubiquitous, but as we will quickly see, the meaning of democracy is deeply contested. People talk about democracy everywhere these days, but they often either don’t mean anything specific when they invoke this term, or they disagree deeply about its meaning. This course will introduce students to a wide range of ideas about the meaning of democracy, and a wide range of views about the state of democracy in the world today. It will move from the ancient Greek origins of democracy in Western theory and practice to contemporary theories and practices of democracy in global contexts. A single semester introductory course cannot possibly cover the broad topic of “democracy” in comprehensive detail. In this course, however, students will develop a broader and deeper appreciation for this central concept in the study of politics, as well as a set of critical skills useful in working through complex problems more generally.

From the University Course Catalog: Comparative exploration; topics include contemporary analysis of the meanings of liberty, equality, representation, property rights, voting rights, and civil responsibilities. Credits: 3 Satisfies General Education Requirement: Social and behavioral science.
Learning Objectives:

1. Become familiar with key concepts in the theory of democracy, and discuss theories of democracy critically and comparatively.

2. Clearly communicate complex ideas orally and in writing.

3. Apply theories of democracy to democratic practices in the real world.

4. Explain how democratic institutions originated and developed, demonstrating awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs.

5. Explain how the development of democratic institutions was influenced by contextual factors, including levels of technology, scale of social organization, and international development.

6. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

Classroom Policies and University Policies:

Cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices

Cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices are NOT ALLOWED in this class. Please keep them stowed away and out of sight. An increasing number of studies indicates that using laptops in the classroom tends to diminish student performance. Please see the professor if you have a special need for a computer, as exceptions can be granted under certain conditions.

Email

Email your professor at any time to schedule a meeting or ask a question. Professor Goldstone checks email during the week between 12pm and 8pm, and will likely reply quickly during those hours. If you email him after 8pm, he will not reply until the next day. If you email him on the weekend, he will not reply until Monday. In the unlikely event that it takes longer than 24 hours to reply to an email sent during the week, please go ahead and email again (it is unusual, but email is occasionally missed). To preserve your privacy rights, the university requires you to use your Masonlive account to email professors (see http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information).

Blackboard

Blackboard will be used for announcements, weekly reading-response assignments, readings, and exams. To access Blackboard, you should go to http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu where all courses you are taking will be available to you. If you have login issues call 703-993-8870 (support@gmu.edu)
Late work

Late work will cause you problems in this course. In the event that you miss an exam, if you contact the professor in a timely fashion, you may be able to write a make up exam. Any make up exams given in this course will be more difficult than ordinary exams. It is not a good idea to miss an exam. If you anticipate having difficulty completing the required work for this course on time, contact the professor in advance to discuss your best options.

GMU is an Honor Code university

GMU is an Honor Code university: please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Learning differences

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu). If you qualify for accommodations, I will be glad to work with you to provide all accommodations you need to achieve success in this class. The ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.

Additional Resources:

- The University has many resources available to support students beyond the classroom. These include:

- The University Writing Center offers both in-person and online writing assistance for students, including online writing guides, reference guides, and style manuals. Additionally, the Writing Center provides assistance to faculty who are interested in holding in-class writing workshops, developing effective writing assignments, or evaluating students’ writing. http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/
• **Academic Advising and Transfer Center** advises students who are thinking about changing majors or who need assistance with their transition to Mason from another institution. [http://advising.gmu.edu/](http://advising.gmu.edu/)

• **Counseling and Psychological Services.** Students can take advantage of psychological services, a variety of learning services, multicultural services, and educational programs that support students’ educational goals. [http://caps.gmu.edu/](http://caps.gmu.edu/)

• **The Academic Counseling Program** provides individual support to students with learning differences such as attention deficit disorder or learning disabilities. [http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/academiccounseling.php](http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/academiccounseling.php)

• **Academic Skills Workshops** and individual study skills counseling provide learning experiences to improve academic skills. [http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/workshops.php](http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/workshops.php)

• **The Certificate in Academic Skills Program** provides a structured, yet individualized program of study to develop academic skills. [http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/skillscertificate.php](http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/skillscertificate.php)

• **The Tutor Referral Program** maintains a roster of undergraduate and graduate students available to provide fee-for-service tutoring assistance. Learning Services staff are available to consult with faculty and staff regarding student learning needs. [http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/tutorreferral.php](http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/tutorreferral.php)

• **Office of Disability Services** implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://ods.gmu.edu/)

**Assignments and Grading:**

**Exams (90%)**

You will write three exams in this course. The first will be worth 20%, the second 30% and final exam 40% of your grade in the course. These exams will be cumulative. They will be written to test your knowledge of the readings, of our classroom discussions, and of course themes. You must do the reading and come to class to do well. Exams may include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The first exam will be in Week 6, the second will be in Week 11, and the Final Examination will be on December 18.

**Reading Response (10%)**

Once a week you will post on blackboard a 4–7 sentence response to your reading assignment. This assignment is intended to help you digest the readings before you come to class. You should either: make a critical comment about the reading, find an interesting point of comparison with another reading, relate the reading to current events, or pose an important question about the reading. You must post by 1pm on the day of class. You must complete 10 postings over the course of the term. Each satisfactory, on time posting will earn 1
percent up to 10 postings; you receive the full 10 percent, that is, for making 10 satisfactory postings. Consistently excellent posts will earn extra credit sufficient to improve a marginal grade (e.g. a high A- will become an A).

**Participation.**

We will make time for discussion in this class. You are encouraged and expected to participate regularly in small group discussions in class. Although low participation in class will not adversely affect your grade, consistently excellent contributions to discussion can earn extra credit sufficient to improve a marginal grade (e.g. a high A- can become an A).

**Grading Scale:**

- A 100-93
- A- 92-90
- B+ 89-87
- B86-83
- B- 82-80
- C+ 79-77
- C 76-73
- C- 72-70
- D 69-60
- F 59-0

**How your Essay Answers are Graded**

- A/A-, Excellent Essay Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.¹

  Textual Analysis: Author produces critical analyses of pertinent texts in support of thesis; analysis is original. Sources and evidence are mastered.

  Argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Counterarguments are acknowledged and engaged when possible.

  Structure and Mechanics of Writing: Structure is evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal or no spelling errors.

¹Note: This grading rubric has been freely adapted from a document created by Patrick Rael, Associate Professor of History, Bowdoin College http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/
• B+/B/B-, Good Essay
Thesis: May be slightly unclear or lacking in insight, originality or ambition.

Textual Analysis: Author produces develops analysis mostly in support of the thesis, though claims are perhaps not exceedingly clear or compelling. Sources and evidence are treated with competence.

Argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed.

Structure and Mechanics of Writing: Structure is generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly.

• C+/C/C-, Problem Essay
Thesis: Is unclear or uncontroversial.

Textual Analysis: Author fails to present adequate evidence for claims or claims are unclear or incorrect. Sources and evidence are not handled competently.

Argumentation: Argument may often fail, be insufficiently supported or be left unclear. Does not consider possible counter-arguments. May contain contradictions.

Structure & Mechanics of Writing: Structure is generally unclear, rambles or jumps around. Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or fragments.

• D, Below Standard Essay
Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point. Textual Analysis: Very little or very weak attempt to relate analysis to evidence; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Little or no use of secondary sources.

Argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Many logical contradictions, or simply too incoherent to determine.

Structure & Mechanics of Writing: Structure is unclear because thesis is unclear or entirely missing. Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

• F, Failing Essay
Shows minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment.

Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis or the thesis is utterly incompetent.
Schedule of Reading and Assignments

All course readings will be available online through blackboard. I strongly recommend that you print and bring your readings with you to class.

The general topical structure of the course is as follows:

Stage 1: WHAT IS DEMOCRACY AND WHAT ARE ITS ORIGINS?
Stage 2: WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERN DEMOCRACY?
Stage 3: WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP IN A MODERN DEMOCRACY?
Stage 4 HOW DO DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM and GLOBALIZATION INTERCONNECT?

Required Texts:


Please purchase these texts; they are all short, inexpensive paperbacks. All other readings will be available on Blackboard for you to download and print.

**Week One: August 28**


- Crick, Chapter 1
- Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address”

**Week Two: September 4**

**No Class -- Labor Day**
Week Three: September 11
Where did democracy come from? Classical origins in Greece and Rome

- Crick, Chapter 2
- Goldstone, Chapter 4
- Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”
- Plato, *The Republic, Chapter VIII*

Week Four: September 18
Absolutism vs. Parliamentary Democracy

- Crick, Chapters 3 and 4
- Goldstone, Chapter 5
- Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

Week Five: September 25
Constitutional Democracy

- Goldstone, Chapter 6
- Crick, Chapter 4
- The Federalist Papers, Nos. 1, 9, 10, 51

Week Six: October 2
Democracy and Citizenship

- Bellamy, Chapters 2 and 3
  - **First Exam during second half of Class.**

Week Seven: October 9
Dictatorship vs. Democracy

- Goldstone, Chapters 8, 9, and 10
- Bellamy, Chapter 4
Week Eight: October 16
Rights, Participation, and Democracy

• Bellamy Chapter 5
• Crick, Chapters 5-7

Week Nine: October 23
Slavery and Democracy

• Edmund Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox”
• Orland Patterson, Freedom: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture (selection)
• Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”
• Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

Week Ten: October 30
Democracy and Development

• Adam Przeworski et al. “What makes Democracies Endure?”
• Goldstone and Kocornik-Mina, “Democracy and Development: A New Understanding based on Dynagraphs”

Week Eleven: November 6

• Second Exam in Class.

Week Twelve: November 13
Capitalism and Democracy

• Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”
• Charles Murray, “Belmont and Fishtown”
**Week Thirteen: November 20**
Social Capital and Democracy


- Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (selection)

**Week Fourteen: November 27**
Illiberalism and Democratic Decline

- Fareed Zakaria, *Future of Freedom*, Ch. 3 “Illiberal Democracy.”

- Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, “The Signs of Deconsolidation”

**Week Fifteen: December 4**
Democracy and Technology

- Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why we Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*

- Zeynep Tufekci, “Mark Zuckerberg is in Denial”

- Simon Kuper, “How Facebook is Changing Democracy”