

University of Maryland, Department of Government and Politics
GVPT449C Seminar in Political Philosophy: Democratic Theory
[3 Credits; Prerequisite: GVPT 241]

Spring 2010
2:00-4:45pm; TYDINGS 0111

I. INSTRUCTOR

Professor Ian Ward

1147 Tydings Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10am-12pm
Office Phone: 301-405-0427
iward@umd.edu

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced undergraduate seminar examines traditions of democratic political thought. Special emphasis is given to the relationships among religion, race and gender in late-modern democratic political thought and practice. Figures to be studied include Alexis de Tocqueville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Jane Addams, John Dewey, Ella Baker, and Martin Luther King Jr. We will also be studying theoretical reflections on traditions of democratic organizing, including abolitionist, suffrage, civil rights and urban organization politics. The course is designed to provide highly advanced undergraduates with an opportunity to engage democratic theory at a demanding scholarly level as well as an occasion for theoretical reflection on their own political commitments.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Seminar Participation: 30% of final grade
- 2) Oral Presentation(s): 20% of final grade
- 3) Short Response Essay, 5-7 pages, due **February 24, 2010**: 10% of final grade
- 4) Research Essay, 15-20 pages, due **May 14, 2010**: 40% of final grade (Includes a paper proposal, due **March 10, 2010**, and an initial draft, due **April 14, 2010**).

All written work must be turned in as a working email attachment (.doc or .docx) to iward@umd.edu by **5pm** (EST) on the relevant due date.

1) Seminar Participation

This is a discussion-intensive seminar, rather than a lecture course. Accordingly, students are expected to attend discussion sections regularly, to do the reading carefully in advance, and to participate responsibly. A student who fails to attend class without a legitimate excuse receives a failing grade for that session. Legitimate excuses include the observance of religious holidays (please notify me, in writing, by the end of the course adjustment period) and issues of a medical nature. Attending class without participating counts as borderline performance (= D). The first week's session does not count toward the grade.

Oral contributions in seminar will be judged according to the following criteria:

- * the degree to which they manifest genuine attention to, and understanding of, the material being discussed;
- * the degree to which they succeed in advancing the discussion by responding meaningfully to what others have said; and
- * the degree to which they articulate coherent, interesting, thoughtful, plausible, and original claims, questions, and arguments.

To earn an A for this component of the course, a student needs to participate regularly in the discussion and satisfy the above criteria in exceptionally high degree. Regular participation, by itself, does not guarantee a high grade. For example, a student who participates regularly and seems to have read the assigned material, but does not demonstrate a good grasp of the ideas and arguments being discussed, and therefore does not contribute much of value to the discussion, would earn a C for seminar performance. Behavior that is disruptive or disrespectful of other students is considered *de facto* non-attendance (= F).

2. Oral Presentations

Starting in the second week of class, each seminar will begin with a 15-20 minute oral presentation addressing the readings and/or other material for that session. The presenter is expected to articulate a careful, original and interesting claim about the readings and argue for it in a way that elicits thoughtful responses from other students. **Each student will be responsible for 1 or 2 presentations (depending on enrollment) throughout the term.**

The most important criterion for evaluating oral presentations is the quality of the seminar discussion they generate. Generally speaking, presentations that **refer explicitly to specific passages of the text(s) under discussion** and raise **at least three questions about the week's material** fare better on this score than those that do not.

Presentations are also evaluated in accordance with the criteria for oral contributions given above.

3. Short Response Papers

These short (5pp) papers are an occasion for you to reflect critically on one of the texts (or the film) studied in the first five weeks of the course. You are expected to articulate a careful, original and interesting claim about the material and argue for it in a way would likely elicit thoughtful responses from other students. In this respect, it resembles an oral presentation; it differs, however, in that it is a written piece.

4. Research Essays

The papers are meant to state a thesis that is both interesting and germane to the topic of the course, to clarify it, and to argue for it. The argument should respond to objections that reasonable people in our scholarly community might want to raise against it. What would make a good paper topic? Anything in the assigned readings is fair game.

The papers are meant:

- * to be carefully written,
- * to be based on independent thinking, and
- * to state, clarify, and defend a thesis of interest to students of political thought.

My standards for judging a paper's quality are all implicit in this simple (but basic) formula. They are due **May 14, 2010**.

All students are required to submit a paper proposal for my approval by **March 10, 2010**. The proposal should be approximately five pages long, and state: (a) the topic you want to address, (b) how you think this topic, and your approach to it, will satisfy the basic formula, (c) a short bibliography, and (d) a tentative outline of your argument. An initial draft of the paper is due on **April 14, 2010**. This means that you will have to read ahead if you're especially interested in writing about texts and themes we address late in the semester. Further information, including advice on writing political philosophy papers and guidelines for research essays, will be posted on the ELMS course site within the first two weeks of class.

IV. COURSE POLICIES

1. Students Registered with DSS:

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form which has been updated for the Spring 2010 semester. This form should be presented to me by the end of the schedule adjustment period.

2. Medical Excuses:

Campus Senate policy requires students who are absent due to illness/injury to furnish documentary support to the instructor. I ask that students contact me by email or by phone, if possible, prior to class time in which you indicate you have an illness/injury. You must present written documentation verifying your illness/injury on the first day of class that you return to class. You will not be allowed to turn in missed assignments or make up papers, presentations, etc. if you have not provided this documentation. In addition, if it is found that you have falsified the documentation provided, I will refer you to the University's Office of Student Conduct.

3. Late Papers:

All written work is due at **5pm** on the relevant due date. **Papers that are late without a documented excuse will be penalized at the rate of a full letter grade per day.** For the purpose of this policy, each day runs from 5pm to 5pm. This means, for example, that a paper turned in at 6pm on the original due date will count as one (1) full day late.

4. Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to be familiar with the University's Code of Academic Integrity (<http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html>), including the Honor Pledge (http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html#honor_pledge).

5. Laptops and Personal Technology Devices:

Use of cellphones, and PDAs in class is prohibited and considered disruptive behavior. Laptops are permitted for note-taking only. **All online course readings should be printed out and brought to class.** Use of laptops for purposes unrelated to the course will result in a participation grade of "F" for that week's session.

6. Calculation of Final Grades:

You will receive a letter grade for each component of the course. In the calculation of your final grade, letter grades will be converted to the following percentages and applied to each weighted

component of the course:

A+ = 100, A = 96.9, A- = 93.4, B+ = 89.4, B = 86.9, B- = 83.4, C+ = 79.4, C = 76.9, C- = 73.4, D+ = 69.4, D = 66.9, D- = 63.4, F = 0

The total points you accumulate for all the course components will then be added and converted to a letter grade according to the following scale:

97 and above = A+; 93.5 – 96.9 = A; 89.5 – 93.4 = A-; 87 – 89.4 = B+; 83.5 – 86.9 = B; 79.5 – 83.4 = B-; 77 – 79.4 = C+; 73.5 – 76.9 = C; 69.5 – 73.4 = C-; 67 – 69.4 = D+; 63.5 – 66.9 = D; 59.5 – 63.4 = D-; 59.4 and below = F

There is no provision for “extra credit” in this course.

7. Grade Concerns: Students with questions or concerns about their grades for any component of the course should send me an email no later than two weeks after receiving their grade, explaining the specific nature of their concerns.

8. Course Evaluations: Students are encouraged to complete the online evaluation (available at www.courseevalum.umd.edu) at the end of the semester.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Required Books available for purchase at the University Book Center:

Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (ISBN: 0679721134)
John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (ISBN: 0804002541)
Mason Lowance ed., *Against Slavery* (ISBN: 0140437584)

All other required readings (marked with an asterisk “**”) will be available on the Course Documents section of the ELMS course page.

I reserve the right to make minor changes to the schedule of readings in consultation with the class. Students will be given timely notice of any such changes in class and via email.

Week One: Introduction and Course Overview

January 27, 2010

Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (Selections);*
James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (Selections)*

Week Two: Democracy Ideal and Actual

February 3, 2010

Film Screening: *Street Fight*
Reading: Michael Walzer, “Philosophy and Democracy;”**

Week Three: De Tocqueville's Reflections

February 10, 2010

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Selections: pp. 3-15, 46-55, 275-87, 417-27, 517-520, 661-76)*

Week Four: Abolitionism

February 17, 2010

Mason Lowance ed., *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader* (University Book Center)

Week Five: Literary Radicalism in America (I)

February 24, 2010

Emerson, "Self-Reliance,"* and "Experience,"*
David Bromwich, "Literary Radicalism in America"*

Week Six: Literary Radicalism in America (II)

March 3, 2010

Thoreau, "A Plea for John Brown"*
Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston*
(Selections)*

Week Seven: Abraham Lincoln

March 10, 2010

Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings* (All Selections available on ELMS site): "Lyceum Address" (9 pp.), "Address to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, Illinois" (9 pp.), "Speech on the War with Mexico" (4 pp.), "Fragment on Slavery" (2 pp.), "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act" (6 pp.), "Selections from the Lincoln-Douglas Debates" (47 pp.), and "Address on Colonization" (5 pp.).

Week Eight: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week Nine: Nineteenth Century Democratic Feminist Theory and Practice

March 24, 2010

Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage* (Selections)*
Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"*
Lucretia Mott, *The Declaration of Sentiments**
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address of September 1848"*

Week Ten: Jane Addams' and John Dewey's Chicago

March 31, 2010

Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (University Book Center), Parts I-III
Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,"* and "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement."*

Week Eleven: John Dewey on Democracy

April 7, 2010

Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, Parts IV-VI

Week Twelve: The Politics of Civil Rights (I): Martin Luther King, Jr. and Critics

April 14, 2010

Martin Luther King Jr., *A Testament of Hope* (Selections)*
Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary* (Selections)*
Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (Selections)*

Week Thirteen: The Politics of Civil Rights (II): Ella Baker, Septima Clark and Democratic Leadership

April 21, 2010

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Selections)*
Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (Selections)*

Week Fourteen: Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation

April 28, 2010

Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (University Book Center)
Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling* (Selections)*

Week Fifteen: Whither Democracy?

May 5, 2010

Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Selections)*
Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers* (Selections)*