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Summer 2007

GVPT 449A – Problems in Modern Political Theory: Democratic Despotism

Introduction:

Democracies are certainly nice to live in, especially when compared to the alternatives. However, they are not without their own problems. In this course, we will set out to explore one of the longest running political problems democracies face, what Alexis De Tocqueville called “democratic despotism.” Democratic despotism has been seen to be bad thing by a variety of different theorists for a variety of reasons. John Stuart Mill thought that it wasted innovative ideas, while Hannah Arendt and George Orwell thought it contributed to Totalitarianism. We will try to explore as many of the dimensions of this problem as possible to give due consideration to the scope and importance of the problem of democratic despotism to democratic theory.

Grading:

The way the schedule works out for summer session is inconvenient, so here is my bargain: There will be no writing assignments besides the final exam, which will be an essay exam. There is a lot of reading, but I have tried to keep the average as low as possible, which is as fair of a bargain as I can make in the course. To sweeten the pot, a large portion of your grade will be a combination of class participation and in-class quiz assignments. This way, most of your grade is comprised of rewarding you for work that you are supposed to be doing anyway. Most of the in-class quizzes will simply test whether or not you have read the book, and your worst quiz will be dropped in case of an absence, a late appearance, or just a bad day. Expect a quiz every class.

The Grade Breakdown is as follows:

- 10% - Class Participation (Attendance & Participation)
- 40% - In-Class Quizzes
- 25% - Mid-Term Exam
- 25% - Final Exam

Academic Honesty:

Everyone at the university is required to follow the [Code of Academic Integrity](http://www.inform.umd.edu/jpo) (www.inform.umd.edu/jpo) . Any member of the campus community may report allegations of code violations directly to the Honor Council (4-8206).

Important Notice:

The University of Maryland is committed to making reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities that have been documented by Disability Support Services (0126 Shoemaker Hall). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please inform us early in the course. Students should not expect that, if they do poorly on an exam or other assignment, to use that as the time to claim a disability. Please notify us *in advance* of any major assignment which this may concern. This statement is to preclude a problem, and allow people with disabilities to be treated fairly and appropriately.

Reading List and Web Addresses:

The reading list is by and large a small and relatively inexpensive collection of not all-too-difficult to obtain books. I recommend the unabridged Harvey Mansfield translation of *Democracy in America*, but it is possible to get by with the abridged version of the book.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty* (URL: <http://www.bartleby.com/130/>)

Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*

Camus, Albert. *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*

Arendt, Hannah *Crises of the Republic* (the essay, "Lying in Politics", can be purchased online from the *New York Review of Books* Archive for \$3 at http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=10375 .)

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*

Orwell George. "Politics and the English Language." (online at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>)

Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion.*

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Date	Assignment
6/5/2007	<i>Film- Quiz Show</i>
6/7/2007	<i>On Liberty</i>
6/12/2007	<i>Democracy in America</i>
6/14/2007	<i>Democracy in America</i>
6/19/2007	"Letter to a German Friend," "Lying in Politics"
6/21/2007	MIDTERM - "Politics and the English Language"
6/26/2007	<i>Public Opinion</i>
6/28/2007	<i>Public Opinion,</i>
7/3/2007	<i>On Revolution</i>
7/5/2007	<i>On Revolution</i>
7/10/2007	<i>On Revolution</i>
7/12/2007	FINAL

