

GVPT449H Seminar in Political Philosophy: Democratic Theory
[3 Credits]

Tuesday 3:30pm - 6:15pm; KEY 0124

INSTRUCTOR:

Ian Ward

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Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2pm to 4pm & by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This honors seminar examines traditions of democratic political thought. Special emphasis is given to the relationships among religion, race and democracy in late-modern political thought and practice. Authors to be studied include James Madison, Alexis de Tocqueville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, John Dewey, 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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Seminar Participation and Postings: 30%
- Oral Presentation(s): 20%
- Final Paper, 20 pages maximum, due **December 15**: 50% (Includes a paper proposal, due **October 28**, and an initial draft, due **November 25**).

Seminar Participation and Postings

This is a discussion-intensive seminar, rather than a lecture course. Accordingly, students are expected to attend class, to do the reading carefully in advance, and to participate responsibly in seminar discussions. 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 advance), participation in University-sponsored activities, and serious problems of a medical, family or otherwise personal nature. Attending class without participating counts as borderline performance (= D). The first session does not count toward the grade.

Students are also required to place short postings (250-350 words) on the Discussion Forum section of the ELMS course website **by 5pm on the Sunday before that week's session**. Postings should address an issue related to the week's readings, and should raise questions that we can take up in class.

Oral contributions in seminar and postings 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 (including making timely postings) and satisfy the above criteria in 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 probably earn a C for seminar performance.

Oral Presentations

Starting in the second week of class, each seminar will begin with a 15 minute oral presentation addressing the required and/or recommended readings 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.

Final Papers

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 or recommended 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. All students are required to submit a paper proposal for my approval by **October 28**. 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 **November 25**. 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 about final papers will be posted on the ELMS course site.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

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).

Students with special needs related to a disability should contact the Disability Support Service (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>) as soon as possible to arrange appropriate accommodations.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Required Books are available for purchase at the University Book Center. All other required readings (marked with an asterisk “*”) will be available on the Electronic Reserve section of the ELMS course page. **NB: Recommended readings are primarily intended for students wishing to pursue an author or topic in greater detail in their final course papers.**

Week One: Introduction and Course Overview

Tuesday, September 2

Recommended Background reading for the course: Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (pp. xvii-10);* James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (pp. 1-33)*

Week Two: Democracy and The Early Republic

Tuesday, September 9

“Publius,” *Federalist Nos. 1, 10, 51, 78* (24 pp.);* “Brutus,” *Anti-Federalist Letters Nos. 1-4* (30 pp.)*

Recommended: Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*; Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*; Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*; David Epstein, *The Political Theory of the Federalist*; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*

Week Three: De Tocqueville's Reflections

Tuesday, September 16

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

Recommended: Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds*; Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism* (Chapter on Tocqueville); Alan Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism*

Week Four: Abolitionism

Tuesday, September 23

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

Recommended: Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, Eddie Glaude, *Exodus! Religion, Race and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*; Al Raboteau, *Slave Religion and A Fire in the Bones*; James Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, pp. 119-215; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*; Mark Graber, *Slavery and the Problem of Constitutional Evil*

Week Five: Emerson: Literary Radicalism in America (I)

Tuesday, September 30

Emerson, "Self-Reliance,"* and "Experience,"*

Recommended for Weeks Five and Six: Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston*; George Kateb, *The Inner Ocean*; Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Chapter 1); David Bromwich, "Literary Radicalism in America" in *A Choice of Inheritance*; Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*

Week Six: Emerson: Literary Radicalism in America (II)

Tuesday, October 7

Emerson, "The American Scholar,"* and "Uses of Great Men"*

Week Seven: Abraham Lincoln

Tuesday, October 14

Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings* (All Selections available on E-Reserve): "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.).

Recommended: Richard Carwardine, *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power*, Alan Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*, Harry Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, James Macpherson's Review of Stout's book in the *New York Review of Books* (March, 2006), Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* 521-796.

Week Eight: Early Democratic Feminist Theory and Practice

Tuesday, October 21

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (2pp.)*

Lucretia Mott, *The Declaration of Sentiments* (Online)*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address of September 1848" (Online)*

Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" (15 pp.),* and "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement" (16 pp.)*

Recommended: Annette Baier, *Moral Prejudices*; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and The Jane Addams Reader*; Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*; Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy*; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*; Catherine Lu, *Just and Unjust Interventions in World Politics*, ch. 2

Week Nine: John Dewey on Democracy (I)
Final Paper Proposal Due

Tuesday, October 28

Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (University Book Center), Parts I-III

Recommended Reading for Weeks Nine and Ten: Eddie Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue*, Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today,"* James Bohman, "Democracy as Inquiry; Inquiry as Democratic,"* Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Chapter on Dewey), Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Martin Jay, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography*. **Especially Recommended: Melvin Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey*

Week Ten: John Dewey on Democracy (II)

Tuesday, November 4

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

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

Tuesday, November 11

King, *A Testament of Hope* (Selections: pp. 35-40, 245-328) (University Book Center)

Recommended Reading for Weeks Eleven and Twelve: Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Myles Horton, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography*, Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*.

Week Twelve: The Politics of Civil Rights (II): Local Organizing

Tuesday, November 18

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7 & 8 (University Book Center)

Week Thirteen: Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation
Initial Draft of Final Paper Due

Tuesday, November 25

Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (University Book Center)

Recommended: Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, Harry Boyte, *Commonwealth*, Ed Chambers, *Roots for Radicals*; Romand Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*

Week Fourteen: Contemporary Theoretical Reflections on Religion, Race and Democracy

Tuesday, December 2

Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling* (Selections: pp. 3-71, 98-123)*

Recommended: Richard Wood, *Faith in Action*, Paul Lichterman, *Elusive Togetherness*, Paul Osterman, *Gathering Power*, Cornel West, *Race Matters* and *Democracy Matters*.

Week Fifteen: Current Trends in Democratic Theory

Tuesday, December 9

Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Selections: pp. 581-606),* Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Selections: pp. 287-308)*

Recommended: David Held, *Models of Democracy*, Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*, Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*.