

## Contemporary Democratic Theory

Summer Session 1 2004

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<http://www.learn.vt.edu>

This course examines contemporary democratic theory. Specifically, it examines work theoretical and applied theories from the last half century. We will consider democracy and several theories. It is important to realize that democracy has many meanings in the modern world, and it is as important to consider what is not democracy to learn about democracy.

The goals of of this course are:

1. To provide an overview of and familiarization of contemporary democratic theory,
2. To introduce students to major debates in democratic theory,
3. To provide an understanding of democracy in the modern world, its meanings, and its implications for our lives.

The format of this class is online. All materials will be handed in and managed electronically. Because of this, students are expected to be able to plan on and manage the myriad of emergencies associated with the online environment. This means that you should have access to the internet through at least one means, but should that fail you should be prepared to do work at your local library or even at a Kinko's or similar establishment. You should keep multiple backups of your work, and be able to provide me a copy of any peice of your work until the final grades are posted.

Learning in this course is centered on student discussion of the materials with instructor guidance. This means that you will have to frequent the course website <http://www.learn.vt.edu> and participate. Participating online and completing weekly reading reviews are mandatory.

Grading:

Weekly Reading Reviews -- 30 points

Discussion -- 20 points

Research paper precis and bibliography -- 10 points

Research Paper -- 40 points

Total Points =100

Readings:

On Democracy by Robert Dahl

What is Democracy? by Alain Touraine

Republic.com by Cass Sunstein

Democracy in Flux by Robert Putnam, etc.

Note Well:

This is a difficult and demanding course, but its rewards can be quite significant - if you do the work. If you either are unwilling or unable to do the work, then do not remain enrolled. This course requires that one read and reflect critically upon the thoughts of political and social theorists in order to discuss their political claims, social implications, and moral ramifications. These materials are some of humanity's most complex works of moral and political philosophy, so you must give yourself plenty of time to read and reflect on each individual assignment. Everyone is expected to do the assigned readings on time and in their entirety. Everyone also is expected to do additional outside work to become more informed about the topic. And, everyone is expected to participate eagerly and voluntarily in class discussions.

Description of Assignments:

Weekly Reading review is around 250 words that discusses the readings for the week. it should be posted under the weekly discussion forum with the subject Reading Review. It should be posted by 5pm friday. It should be of high quality, demonstrate that you have read the material, introduce issues that you found particularly interesting, and relate them to the course. It should not significantly, in the instructors judgement, replicate any work that was posted before you post

yours. Each will be worth 6 points. There will be 5, one each in week 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. In week 6, you will be doing independent research and writing of your paper.

Discussion/Participation is the part of the class where you in the discussion forums post on average 2 posts per day Monday through Friday, and make insightful, interesting comments that add substantially to the course.

The precis and bibliography and bibliography are due at the end of week 4. A precis is a sketch of the argument you seek to present in your paper. It should be in paragraph form, probably no more than 250 words. The bibliography should have 10-15 high quality citations, and perhaps a few other citations. This is the initial bibliography for your research paper. It should be formatted according to a recent Chicago Manual of Style (you can find a copy in most libraries). You will choose your own topic to write on, it must be related to the course in some direct manner that is clear to the instructor. If you are unsure of your topic, ask.

The final research paper should be 10-15 pages, which is 2500 - 3750 words. Stylistically, it should be of a quality that one would expect in a publishable article, which means; no grammar mistakes, no spelling mistakes, no logical errors, using citations appropriately, etc. Beyond this, your research should directly inform your paper. It should be unique work authored by you, citing appropriately.

Schedule:

Week 1

Read Dahl

Turn in Reading Review.

Week 2

Read Touraine

Read Introduction and Conclusion of Putnam

Turn in Reading Review

Week 3

Choose 4 Countries in Putnam and Read them

Turn in Reading Review

Week 4

Read Sunstein

Turn in Reading Review

Turn in Precis and Bibliography

Week 5

Read Articles posted online (will be provided)

Turn in Reading Review

Week 6

Turn in Research Paper on the Second Day of Final Exams.