This course focuses on modern theories of democracy. However, even contemporary democratic theories have to resolve a question that goes all the way back to the original Greek definition of democracy as popular power or popular rule: namely, how much direct self-government and how much equality does democracy demand? From this question a number of others follow. Is the equality guaranteed to all citizens in a democracy satisfied if we have nominal voting rights, representation, and protections in our private pursuits; or must political equality in addition allow for active participation in deliberating upon and influencing the outcome of legislation? Does democracy require the egalitarian distribution of social and economic goods or should such distributions not be part of democratic decision-making? Is democracy reconcilable with large nations? Is the struggle for political equality finished? These will be the recurrent questions of this course.

We will tackle these questions by reading some of the major arguments in both classical and contemporary democratic theory. First we will read two of the classical theorists of democracy: Rousseau and Madison, the first who argues the only legitimate republic is one in which the citizens directly give themselves the laws that they will obey and the latter who argues that the job of a republic is to balance factions against one another and provide ways to filter out the common passions of the public by putting barriers to direct popular self-rule. We will then discuss a number of contemporary theories that claim that democracy and the rule of elites can be made compatible. We will then examine a variety of “models” that have been proposed to deepen democracy in modern societies: among them economic democracy, local democracy, deliberative forms of democracy, and mass protest (which isn’t a model at all). Finally, we will examine four issues central to contemporary debates over democracy: 1) whether the capitalist market is compatible with democratic citizenship; 2) whether the theory of “democratization” applied to foreign countries that have overcome authoritarian rule turns out to make good on its promises; 3) whether the American constitution is sufficiently democratic, in particular whether it
allows its citizens to hold politicians accountable and whether it is a model worthy of being followed by other polities; 4) and whether the internet and the new communications media expand democratic self-government or restrict it. Throughout this course you will be asked to engage with these arguments— to analyze them, to find their strengths and weaknesses, to play them off one another, and ultimately deploy them to forge your own theory of democracy.

Course Requirements
The assignments for this course will be the following:
1) A 4-6 page essay on Rousseau and Madison due on Monday, September 30.
2) A take-home midterm on Schumpeter, Dahl and Walzer and Pateman focusing on democratic elitism and its critics, Dahl’s right to a democratic procedure, and the theorists of economic democracy on Monday October 19.
3) A take-home final essay exam covering local democracy, deliberative democracy and the following issues in democratic theory: the tension between democracy and markets, the adequacy of the concept of democratization, the assessment of the American constitution, and democracy and the internet.
Topics will be handed out at least a week in advance, except in the case of the final.

Grading: Each assignment will count for roughly one third of the grade though I take improvement into account. You will be graded not just on your knowledge of the arguments but on you analytical skill in taking them apart. Good writing will be expected, and poor writing will obviously effect negatively on your grade. I will put some instructions on e-reserve on writing good political theory papers.

Class attendance: I should stress that you are expected to attend class. If you do not attend for three sessions your grade will go done by a half. Each additional day will have the same result.

E-reserve: I will put the syllabus, assignments, guides to writing, and possible recommended readings on e-reserve. The password will be: pos306.

Humanities Requirement: This course meets the Humanities Requirement of the General Education Category in the following ways: It addresses central topics in political philosophy, understands theories in a their cultural and historical contexts, promotes an ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of arguments and examines the assumptions underlying both present and canonical works in political philosophy. It ultimately involves the interpretation of texts and arguments.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that should I find you have plagiarized, you will receive an immediate E in the course and further actions will be taken including sending your case before a university committee.

Office Hours
Uptown: M, W, 11:30-12:30 and by appt. in Humanities B-16. I will always be happy to meet with you as well after class. (If these times are difficult to make you are welcome to visit me in my downtown office, Milne 220, Rockefeller College. Since this is my main office, it will often be easier to meet there for an extended discussion). Downtown office hours: Mon 2-4 and Wed 2-4 in Milne 204. Office phone in Milne 204: 442-5277. Phone in Humanities B-16: 442-3112. E-mail: breiner@albany.edu

**Course Outline**

I. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Legitimacy, Self-interest, and Popular Sovereignty
   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Bks I, II, III, IV, chs. 1, 2 in *Basic Political Writings*
   Paper on Rousseau and Madison due in class September 30th.

II. James Madison, Self-Interest, Equilibrium, and Republicanism
   James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, no. 10, 48, 49, 51 (read 10 and 51 very carefully).
   Also editorials Madison wrote after the ratification of the U.S. constitution (in readings).

III. Democracy as Method and the Elitest Theory of Democracy
   A. Joseph Schumpeter, chs. 20-23, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (in readings).

IV. The Criticism of Elitist Democratic Theory
   Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Chapter 1, “Recent Theories of Democracy” (in readings)

V. The Attempt to Recover a More Democratic Polyarchy--A Right to a Democratic Procedure
   Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, chapters 8*, 9, 12, 15 (pp. 220-224), 16, 23*
   (*read with special care.)

VI. Economic Democracy
   Michael Walzer, “Property/Power” from *Spheres of Justice* (in readings).
   Reread, Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, pp. 328-332
   Take-home midterm essay on debate over elite theory, Dahl’s right to democratic procedure within polyarchy, and workplace democracy due October 19th.

VII. Local Democracy--Rousseau recovered or superseded?
   Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, chs. 1, 6-10
VIII. Deliberative Democracy
Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere” (in readings)

IX. Democracy, Representation and Protest.

X. Issues in Democratic Theory I: Democratic Politics vs. Markets.
A. The priority of the market over democracy:
Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* chs. 1, 2 (in readings).

B. Too big to fail? The imprisonment of democracy by the market.


XI. Issues in Democratic Theory II: Who Benefits from “Democratization.”

XII. Issues in Democratic Theory III: Is the American Constitution Sufficiently Democratic?
Recommended: ch. 4 (“ELECTING A PRESIDENT”).

XIII. Issues in Democratic Theory IV: The Internet and Democracy.
Cass Sunstein, *Republic.Com*

Take home final due one week from last day of class. Questions handed out on last day.