This course focuses on modern theories of democracy. However, even contemporary democratic theories have to resolve two questions that go all the way back to the original Greek definition of democracy as popular power, popular rule, or popular sovereignty: first, how much direct self-government is necessary for a political community to be called a democracy; and second, how much equality of status, wealth, political goods are required for citizens to have equal membership and equal influence on decision-making? From these questions 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? Whom should we include as citizens—only native-born individuals, immigrants, anyone who happens to be within our borders? Is democracy reconcilable with large nation states? Is the struggle for political equality finished? What should the relation be between democracy and the economy?

We will tackle these questions by reading some of the major arguments in both classical and contemporary democratic theory. First we will read one of the classic theories of democracy: The Social Contract by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau famously argues that the only legitimate republic is one in which the citizens directly give themselves the laws that they will obey. Rousseau’s work raises many of the fundamental questions every theory of democracy must answer. And time and again, we will be referring back to Rousseau when discussing contemporary theories of democracy.

We will then discuss a number of contemporary theories that take up the questions raised by Rousseau. On the one side, we will read a number of political theorists who argue that democracy and the rule of elites can be made compatible and the criticism of this position. We will then examine number of “models” and practices that have been proposed to deepen
democracy in modern societies: among them theories of democratic procedures that render citizens more effectual in putting issues on the agenda and influencing decisions; economic democracy, deliberative forms of democracy, and mass protest as forms of democracy.

Finally, we will examine series of issues central to contemporary debates over democracy:
1) Do the political parties in the US further or diminish inequality of income and wealth and does the majority vote their interests on this matter?
2) Is the capitalist market compatible with democratic citizenship?
3) What are the consequences of the influence of finance and banking for our understanding of democracy? Does it represent a unique challenge to democracy?
4) Whether and to what degree does democracy require a welfare state providing a wide array of public goods?
5) In what sense does “populism” represent an answer to the decline of democracy and in what sense is it a danger.
6) Is democracy compatible with globalism?

Class Objectives: Throughout this course you will be asked to engage with a variety of democratic theories and arguments in favor of political equality. Your job will be 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 due on in class February 9.
2) A midterm on Schumpeter, Dahl and the critics of elitist and pluralist models of democracy on Monday, February 29 whose format is yet to be decided.
3) A 6 page paper on alternative models of democracy—economic democracy, deliberative democracy, and revolution—on Tuesday March 22 to be handed in at HU B16.
4) A take-home final essay exam on the following issues in democratic theory: the tension between democracy and markets; the question of whether democracy requires a welfare state; the question of whether political parties make a difference on income inequality; globalism and democracy; and immigration and political membership. The take-home exam will be handed out the last day of class, Wednesday May 4, and due in a week.

Paper topics will be handed out at least a week in advance, except in the case of the final.

Grading: Each paper will count 20% of the grade while the final will count 30% of the grade. 10% of the grade will be allotted to participation and engagement. I take improvement into account. You will be graded not just on your knowledge of the arguments, but also on your analytical skill in taking them apart and putting them back together. Good writing will be expected, and poor writing will obviously affect your grade adversely. I will put a guide on Blackboard to 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 without a legitimate excuse your grade will go down by one half. I will be checking occasionally, but if you are a serious student this proviso should be irrelevant.

Blackboard: I will put the syllabus, additional reading, class assignments, guides to writing, and recommended readings on Blackboard.

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 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 before class or arrange a time suitable to both of us. (If these times are difficult to make you are welcome to visit me in my downtown office, Milne 204, Rockefeller College. Downtown office hours: Mon 2-3:30 and Wed 2-3:30 in Milne 204. Office phone in Milne 204: 442-5277. Phone in Humanities B-16: 442-3112. E-mail: pbreiner@albany.edu

**Course Outline**
**The Problem Defined (Jan 22-29)**
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Bks I, II, III, IV, chs. 1, 2 in *Basic Political Writings*

Paper on Rousseau due in in HU B16 February 9 by 3pm (topics will be handed out a week in advance).

**Models of democracy**
II. Modern Attempts to Overcome Rousseau’s Challenge: Democracy as Method and the Elitist Theory of Democracy

A. Democratic Elitism: Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, chs. 20-23 (Blackboard). (Feb 1-5)

III. The Criticism of Elitist Democratic Theory
Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Chapter 1, “Recent Theories of Democracy” (Blackboard). (Feb 10)
Recommended: Robert Dahl, “Pluralism Revisited” *Comparative Politics* 10, 2 (1978) (Blackboard)

IV. The Attempt to Recover a More Democratic Polyarchy–A Right to a Democratic Procedure and the Deepening of Political Equality. (Feb 12-19)
Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, chapters Intro, 2, 6, 8*, 9*, 12, 15 (pp. 220-224), 16, 23* (*read with special care.)
Midterm on debate over elite theory and Dahl’s right to democratic procedure within polyarchy, Monday, February 29—format yet to be determined.

V. Economic Democracy
Michael Walzer, “Property/Power” from *Spheres of Justice* (Blackboard). (Feb 22)

VI. Deliberative Democracy
Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere” (Blackboard) Feb 24-26
Joshua Cohen “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy” (Blackboard)

VIII. Democracy and Protest
Albert Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements* (entire). (March 2-4)
(Possibly applying Hirschman to examples of protest-- to be handed out)
Paper on workplace democracy, deliberative democracy, and democratic protest due on, Tuesday, March 21 in HU B16.

**Issues in Democratic Theory**
IX. Issues in Democratic Theory I: Democratic Politics vs. Markets.
A. The priority of the market over democracy:
Friedrich von Hayek, “‘Social’ and Distributive Justice” (Blackboard). (March 7)

B. The imprisonment of democracy by the market.
Charles Lindblom, “The Privileged Position of Business” and “Consequences for Polyarchy” from *Politics and Markets* (Blackboard). (March 9-11)

C. Too big to fail? Finance and Democracy.

Recommended: Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*
Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time*
Raymond Plant, *The Neo-liberal State*
X. Issues in Democratic Theory II: Democracy and the Welfare State  
A. A social democratic defense of the welfare state vs. neo-liberalism: Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (entire). March 28-April 1  
Recommended:  
Christopher Pierson, *Beyond the Welfare State*  
T. H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*  
T. R. Reid, “Five Myths About Health Care” Washington Post, 8/21/2009 (Blackboard)  

XI. Issues in Democratic Theory III: Income Inequality and Democracy?  
A. Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy Unequal Democracy*, chs 1-5, 10  
Read either ch 6 (“Homer Gets a Tax Break”) or 9 (“Inequality and Political Representation”). (April 4-8)  

XII. Issues in Democratic Theory IV Populism and Democracy—Is the populist attack on political and financial elites a retrieval of or a danger to democracy?  
Ernesto Laclau, “Populism What’s in a Name?” from Francisco Pinizza ed. *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (April 13)  

XIII. Issues in Democratic Theory VI: National Boundaries, Immigrants, and Democracy:  
B. Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, ch. 9 (reread). (April 20)  

XIV. Issues in Democratic Theory V: Globalism a Challenge to Democracy?  

X. Catch up and Sum up. (May 2, 4)  
Take-home final handed out on last day of class May 4. Return in one week.