Radical Democracy
RPOS 314 – 0001
(9237)

Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:15 p.m. – 2:35 a.m.
Location: Room AS 014
Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis
Political Science Department
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
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Course Description

Today, when political tends to be replaced by economy, freedom by security, individuals by corporations and rights by wealth, the question of democracy resurfaces as one of the tenets of politics. The concept of democracy is multifaceted, complex and even paradoxical. There have been variety of democratic theories developed throughout the history of the Western political thought. The development of nation states and two major World Wars followed by the fall of Communist regimes in the East, and the strengthening of neoliberalism in the West in the late modernity fostered the need to re-think the notion of democracy in non-orthodox ways. This course focuses on the concept of radical democracy. It will introduce students to various formulations of the radical democratic project (absolute democracy, true democracy, agonistic democracy, constituent democracy, representative democracy, liberal democracy, etc.) and examine debates over the radical content and meaning of democracy.

This course consists of intensive, seminar type sessions, which will require your active participation and contribution to discussions based on a close reading and analysis of assigned texts. The course does not have a traditional format exams instead, for your mid-term and final exams you will be required to write papers. In addition, there will be short written homework assignments as well as in-class presentations. Overall, you should be ready to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort for this course. Your prior engagement in classes of political theory will be useful but is not required.

Learning Objectives

✓ Learn to interpret the concept of democracy in the light of different political theories and different historical periods.
✓ To be able to critically interpret various arguments in relation to the meaning of the concept of radical democracy by close analysis of their styles, historical and cultural contexts, levels of meaning and logical structuring.
✓ To be able critically evaluate major contemporary ideological strands associated with the notion of democracy and build one’s own understanding and interpretation of “radical democracy.”

Course Requirements

As a student registered for this class and receiving course credit, your responsibilities are:
✓ Attend all lectures.
✓ Arrive to lectures on time.
✓ Complete all readings by the assigned date, and come to class prepared.
✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
✓ Bring assigned readings to class with you.
✓ Be an active listener during the lectures: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.
**Required Readings**

Reading and writing are essential tools and of crucial importance in learning political theory. Through reading, we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different political concepts in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts, you should be able to deconstruct arguments, compare them with the arguments of other thinkers on the same subject and most importantly – formulate your own ideas based on the material that you have read and discussed in class and present them in a logical and succinct way in your written assignments as well as class discussions.

There is a list of required books for this course. We will read all of them in their entirety but most of their content or selected key chapters and sections. Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard for your convenience. (These are marked “online” in a class schedule) When assignments include reading material placed online on a Blackboard, you should print out those readings, read them carefully and bring them to class with you.

Required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as a bookstore as well as make sure to time your orders appropriately so books arrive on time when you need them for the class and not later.

**Books:**


**Assignments**

**Written Assignments**

This course does not have a standard midterm or final exam. Instead, there is a *midterm paper* and a *final paper*. Both papers carry the same academic grade values as a midterm and final exams. In addition, there will be *three short, three-page length homework assignments*, each in the form of responding to a question that will be emailed posited and emailed to your SUNY e-mail address. You will *print out your answers*, and *bring the hard copy to the class on the day the homework is due, and submit it to me at the end of the lecture before you leave the room*. Remember, this is a political theory class. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. What is required is your own critical and analytical thinking and strong familiarity with the arguments, ideas and concepts of the assigned readings which will also discuss in class.

**Presentations**

Each of you will require to prepare a short, 10 – 15 min. presentation on the topic and a set of readings assigned for a particular date of the course week. Your presentations should be followed by two or three questions that you will posite to your fellow students which hopefully will precipitate an open discussion. These short presentations will help you to practice to present arguments developed in the texts you read in a concise manner as well as engage in a meaningful discussion with your peers. Feel free to comment on each other’s’ questions and responses, or to share relevant additional readings and ideas.
Office Hours:
You should not feel any hesitation to come see me to talk about the course material and lectures during my office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in the Humanities B16 office. In addition, I will be ready to meet you outside of these hours at a time more convenient for you if you schedule an appointment with me by e-mail at least three days in advance. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after class if you have time.

Blackboard and online readings
Some readings are placed on Blackboard for your convenience. Find the course, RPOS 314 and click on it. There you will find folders marked by dates when the readings are due. Each folder contains required readings for that day. You must download and print the readings or the appropriate, assigned sections of them, read them carefully at home and bring them to class with you.

Attendance
You are responsible for all material covered in the class. Attendance will be taken within the first five minutes of the class. Do not be late. You should make arrangements with other students to share notes if you miss the class. If you have an excused absence, make sure you do assigned readings first, then come to me during office hours to discuss the material.

**Missing more than two classes, repeated lateness, or arriving unprepared will lower your final grade by one letter grade. Missing more than four classes will result in two letter grades lower on the final course grade.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites such as Sparknotes, Wikipedia or any other source and "rewriting them" without citing or indicating the source will also earn you an E along with further actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of your own and to demonstrate that you have did the readings, understood them and have something meaningful to say in response to them.

Course Grade Breakdown
Midterm paper: 25%
Presentations: 15%
Three short response papers: 20%
Final paper: 35%
Class participation and attendance: 15%

Overall Course Grade Requirements:
• Class Participation and attendance (10%): This portion of the grade is based on evaluation of your participation in class discussions, your preparedness for each class, attendance and lateness. Having an individual grasp of the reading at hand prior to classroom sessions means that you will be able to understand the relevant concepts and ideas, and will be able to apply them to the discussions with your fellow students during each session in a critical, respectful and meaningful way. Your ability to participate in the class discussion will depend on the effort you put in reading assigned materials at home. The texts are engaging and exciting but also complicated and time consuming. Spent time wrestling with ideas of each thinker and you will be rewarded by gaining a deeper understanding of their arguments which will enrich your knowledge as a political thinker.
• Presentation (15%) Each of you will have a short 10 – 15 min. presentation and a lead of a discussion on 2 – 3 questions that you will propose to the class to discuss after the presentation.
• **Three short response papers (20%)** These are short 3-page answers to the questions pertaining to certain sections of the course. These questions will be announced seven days prior to the due date which will give you a week to complete your homework assignment. **No late submissions or submissions by e-mail will be accepted.**

• **Midterm paper (25%)** A 4 - page paper on a topic based on the material covered in the first half of the semester. A set of questions will be distributed one week prior to the due date. **No late submissions, or submissions by e-mail will be accepted.** You must to hand in a physical hard copy of your paper on the due date at the beginning of the class.

• **Final Paper (30%)** 6 - page paper. Depending on the question, you may have to do some additional research to gain the proper level of knowledge on the thinker or the problem you have chosen to investigate. **Late submissions, or submissions by e-mail will not be accepted.** You must to hand in a physical hard copy of your final paper to me in class on the due date and time which are the date and time of the final exam as stated in SUNY’s academic schedule.

**Midterm and Final Papers**

Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a midterm and final papers. **No late submission of mid-term or final papers will be accepted.**

**Late mid-term or final paper submission will be accepted or incomplete grades will be given only in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.**

For more information on the University's Standards of Academic Integrity see:
http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

**Lectures**

Lecture is a time for a professor to present the readings and unpack the arguments presented in texts at hand. However, there are strong benefits to a seminar type lectures. The form of intellectual dialogue is the most rewarding academic practice. You are strongly encouraged to participate in a dialogue and the academic discussion based on the assigned readings. Feel free to interrupt me by raising your hand, asking questions, making comments, providing points of critique. Do not shy from respectfully responding to your fellow student arguments and contributing to a class discussion in general. Your participation will boost your overall course grade as well as allow you for a better grasp and critical assessment of the material. I encourage you to be an active participant in lectures, rather than a passive listener.

**Grade Appeals**

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.

**What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?**

Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holiday, e.g.) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible.

**Excused Absences**

If you must miss the mid-term or final paper deadline or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the **dean of undergraduate studies** (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your
grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see: 
http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, 
cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in 
this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office 
will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate 
accommodations (http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, 
inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in 
advance and rarely granted retroactively.

What can I do to succeed academically in this course?

The Basics: Show up, read, listen, take notes, ask questions

The most important indicator for success is completing assigned readings, regular attendance and active 
participation in a class.

Visit Office Hours

I will hold office hours two hours each week. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity 
to discuss material or other questions on political theory, or if you are seeking an advice on academic success in 
the field in general. If you are unable to attend the scheduled office hours due to a conflict with another class, 
email me to request an alternate time.

Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)

Tutorials on writing essays and improving language skills (ESL). Visit their website at: 
http://www.albany.edu/writing/index.html or call 442-4061.

Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)

Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your 
concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: 
http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm or contact them at 442-5180.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I

What democracy? Re-discovering the Meaning

1. Tuesday, August 29: General introduction

2. Thursday, August 31:

3. Tuesday, September 5:

4. Thursday, September 7:

5. Tuesday, September 12:

6. Thursday, September 14:
   (Chapter 3)
7. Tuesday, September 19:
   (Chapter 4)

8. Thursday, September 21
   No Class – Rosh Hashanah

9. Tuesday, September 26:
   First homework assignment announced

10. Thursday, September 28:

11. Tuesday, October 3:
    First short homework assignment due hard copy in class

   Part II
   Democracy and Representation

12. Thursday, October 5:

13. Tuesday, October 10:

14. Thursday, October 12
    Second homework assignment announced

   Part III
   Ancient Democracy. Contemporary Interpretations

15. Tuesday, October 17

16. Thursday, October 19
    Second homework assignment due hard copy in class
    Paul Cartledge, ”Democratic politics ancient and modern: from Cleisthenes to Mary Robinson,” Hermathena, No. 166 (Summer 1999), pp. 5-29.” (On Blackboard. Print and bring it to class)

17. Tuesday, October 24

   Ancient Democracy. Praise and Critique

18. Thursday, October 26
    (These readings are available on Blackboard. Print and bring them to class)
    Herodotus, Histories, Book III: 80-84
    Thucydides, "Pericles Funeral Oration," The Peloponnesian War

19. Tuesday, October 31
    Plato, The Republic, Book VIII.
Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*. From Part 20 to Part 40. (On Blackboard. Print and bring to class)

**20. Thursday, November 2**
Midterm paper assignment announced

**Part IV**
Paradoxes of Modern Democracy

**21. Tuesday, November 7**
Pages: 3-17 and Chapter 2. Pages: 35 - 87.

**22. Thursday, November 9**
Midterm paper due

**23. Tuesday, November 14**

**24. Thursday, November 16**

**25. Tuesday, November 21**
Third homework assignment announced

**Thursday, November 23**
No Class. Thanksgiving Break

**26. Tuesday, November 28**
Third homework due.

**27. Thursday, November 30**
Third homework due

**28. Tuesday, December 5**
Final exam paper assignment announced.

**29. Thursday, December 7**
Last class. Course wrap up

**Final Exam: Wednesday, December 13th. From 10:30am to 12:30pm in the same room: AS 014**