

PHIL 170: SOCIAL ETHICS AND POLITICAL THOUGHT (FALL 2016)

210 STONE CENTER, MONDAY/WEDNESDAY 1:25-2:40

385 PHILLIPS, MONDAY/WEDNESDAY 3:35-4:50

Professor Amy Berg

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OFFICE: 10 Caldwell Hall

OFFICE HOURS: Fridays 12:30-2:30

COURSE OVERVIEW

Winston Churchill famously remarked, “Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried.” With an election coming up, now is the time to ask whether Churchill was right. What is democracy good for? How should we organize our democracy? What are our obligations as citizens of a democracy? What challenges does democracy face, now and in the future? During this semester, we will investigate each of these questions:

- **What is democracy good for?** We begin by defining democracy and considering major arguments in favor and against it.
- **How should we organize it?** Considering justifications for democracy leads us into our second section, in which we look at different theories of democracy—libertarian, pluralist, and participatory—and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.
- **What are our obligations?** The main issue we will consider in the third section of the course is voting. Do we all have an obligation to vote, or could it ever be morally wrong to vote? What voting system should our society use? We will also briefly think about whether we should ever engage in civil disobedience.
- **What challenges does democracy face?** We end with a look forward to the challenges democracy faces, now and in the future. Do past and present racism and inequality affect the kind of democracy America should build? And can democracy cope with the threats posed by climate change?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

You will need:

- The readings. We will be using one book and a number of articles:
 - The book, *Theories of Democracy* (eds. Ronald J. Terchek and Thomas C. Conte, Rowman & Littlefield 2001, ISBN 978-0-8476-9725-0), is available at the UNC Bookstore.
 - The articles you will need are available on Sakai.
- Complete all assigned readings before coming to class.
- Access to Sakai, where I will post the syllabus, readings, assignments, and other information.

Assignments: There are nine assignments due in this course:

- Two take-home exams (3 pages and 4 pages), due by the start of class on October 3 and October 24.
- A 4-5 page final paper, due by December 10/12 depending on your section.
- A short in-class debate, held on November 7.
- Three short reading responses, due throughout the semester. In each of these assignments, you must reflect on some aspect of the reading—something you didn’t understand, a question or objection you had, etc. Each response should be between 75 and 200 words long. The first of these assignments **must** be turned in **by September 13**, so that I can grade

and return it early in the course. You may complete the other two on your own schedule, but I encourage you to pace yourself—don't leave them all for the last few weeks of the semester. These assignments are due by 2:00 on the day **before** our course meets (that is, by 2:00 on Sundays and Tuesdays). Submit them via Sakai.

All assignments will be graded anonymously; you should put your PID, *not* your name, on them.

Attendance and participation:

- Participation is part of your final grade in this course; to participate, you need to attend. You are allowed **two unexcused absences** over the course of the semester; if you must be absent more than that, please speak to me (and bring documentation from a doctor or dean).
- But participation is more than just attendance! In order to receive full participation points, come ready to make active, serious, charitable contributions to class discussion. **I reserve the right to call on students at random if you are not participating actively.** If you are not comfortable participating in class, I will count active, serious, charitable visits to my office hours toward your participation grade.

The grade breakdown is:

- **Take-home exam 1:** 15%
- **Take-home exam 2:** 25%
- **Final paper:** 35%
- **Debate:** 9%
- **Reading responses:** 6%
- **Participation:** 10%

The grade scale is:

	A: 93-100%	A-: 90-92%
B+: 87-89%	B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%
C+: 77-79%	C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%
D+: 67-69%	D: 60-66%	
F: below 60%		

Lateness policy: Assignments must be turned in at the start of class on the day they are due.

There are no exceptions unless you make prior arrangements with me. I will deduct three percent of your final grade if the paper is turned in the day it's due any time after the start of class and one-third of a grade for each day after that that the paper is late (so, for example, a paper that would have gotten 100% if it were turned in on time on Tuesday would get 91% if turned in on Thursday).

On writing: Your success in this class depends on the ability to express yourself clearly. Here are some writing resources I recommend:

- **The Writing Center** (SASB North; writingcenter.unc.edu/) will talk through ideas, work through a draft with you, and generally give advice at all stages of the writing process.
- **The Learning Center** (SASB North; <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>) has a variety of resources, including workshops and peer tutoring, that can help you succeed in this and your other courses.
- **Style**, by Joseph M. Williams (University of Chicago Press, 1990) is an excellent guide to clear and forceful writing. It's widely and cheaply available at bookstores and through Amazon.

Other policies

- **Electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) are not allowed in class**, except by permission. If you need to use an electronic device in order to be successful in this course, please speak with me.
- **You must observe UNC's Honor Code.** All work you turn in must be written by you, without anyone else's assistance, and not self-plagiarized (that is, you may not turn in work you have written for a previous class). I am happy to talk to you if you have any questions about the Honor Code, or you can consult <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>. If I suspect that you may be in violation of the Honor Code, I will not hesitate to report you to the Office of Student Conduct.
- If you need an accommodation for a disability or for religious, athletic, or any other reasons, please let me know during the first week of the course. If you have concerns about accessibility, I encourage you to visit UNC's Accessibility Resources and Service website (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/about-ars>) and speak with me about your concerns.
- You are welcome and encouraged to come to my office hours or make an appointment with me whenever you want to talk about the course material, your assignments, or any other philosophy-related concerns you have.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS [* INDICATES READINGS FROM TERCHEK AND CONTE]

Wednesday, August 24: Course introduction

Reading: None

Monday, August 29: Defining democracy

Reading: Gilens and Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics"

Wednesday, August 31: Arguments for democracy

Reading: Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*

Monday, September 5: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Reading: None

Wednesday, September 7: Arguments for democracy

Reading: Cumming-Bruce and Erlanger, "Swiss Ban Building of Minarets on Mosques"; Dearden, "Anger over 'Bregret' as Leave Voters Say They Thought UK Would Stay in EU"

Monday, September 12: Arguments for democracy

Reading: *Rousseau, *The Social Contract*; *Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

Tuesday at 2pm is your last chance to turn in your first reading response on time

Wednesday, September 14: Arguments against democracy

Reading: Plato, *The Republic*

Monday, September 19: Arguments against democracy

Reading: Jagger, "Traditional Marxism and Human Nature"

Take-home exam 1 assigned Monday

Wednesday, September 21: How should we organize our democracy?

Reading: *Hayek, *The Political Order of a Free People*

Monday, September 26: How should we organize our democracy?

Reading: *Friedman, "The Role of Government in a Free Society"

Wednesday, September 28: How should we organize our democracy?

Reading: *Bentley, *The Process of Government*

Monday, October 3: How should we organize our democracy?
Reading: *Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*
Take-home exam 1 due Monday

Wednesday, October 5: How should we organize our democracy?
Reading: *Dewey, "Democratic Ends Need Democratic Means for their Realization";
 *Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*

Monday, October 10: How should we organize our democracy?
Reading: *Barber, *Strong Democracy*
Take-home exam 2 assigned Monday

Wednesday, October 12: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Brennan and Sayre-McCord, "Voting and Causal Responsibility"

Monday, October 17: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Lacroix, "A Liberal Defense of Compulsory Voting"

Wednesday, October 19: FALL BREAK – NO CLASS
Reading: None

Monday, October 24: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Brennan, "Polluting the Polls"
Take-home exam 2 due Monday
Debate groups assigned Monday

Wednesday, October 26: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative"

Monday, October 31: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*

Wednesday, November 2: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Estlund, "Why Not Epistocracy?"

Monday, November 7: Voting debates
Reading: None

Wednesday, November 9: Catch-up and election discussion
Reading: None

Monday, November 14: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Wednesday, November 16: Citizens' obligations in a democracy
Reading: Woolf, *In Defense of Anarchism*

Monday, November 21: Challenges for democracy
Reading: Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto"
Final paper assigned Monday

Wednesday, November 23: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS
Reading: None

Monday, November 28: Challenges for democracy
Reading: Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water*

Wednesday, November 30: Challenges for democracy
Reading: *Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

Monday, December 5: Challenges for democracy

Reading: Beckman, "Do Global Climate Change and the Interest of Future Generations Have Implications for Democracy?"

Wednesday, December 7: Challenges for democracy

Reading: Goodin, "Enfranchising the Earth, and Its Alternatives"

Saturday, December 10: Wrap-up

Reading: None

Final paper due Saturday (MW 3:35-4:50)

Monday, December 12: Wrap-up

Reading: None

Final paper due Monday (MW 1:25-2:40)