

POLS 399: On Democracy (CRN #35689)
Wednesdays 12:00-2:30 p.m., BSB 1171

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:30 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

Who are the people, and what does it mean for them to rule? This is a seminar on democracy. We explore democracy both as an institutionalized form of government and as a critical or mobilizing idea. We will read ancient, modern, and contemporary texts, mostly from and about the ancient Mediterranean and modern North Atlantic worlds.

POLS 399 is a seminar; it is essential that students read each meeting's complete assignment *before* class, and that they faithfully attend each week's session prepared to contribute. POLS 399 is also a writing-in-discipline course: students are expected to prepare weekly memos as well as two critical essays on assigned topics (essay drafts followed by individual conferences with the instructor are strongly recommended). Final grades will be based on memos (30%), two critical essays (25% and 30%), and attendance and participation (15%).

Each week, students will turn in a brief (400-600 word) memo. These must be written in sentence and paragraph form, and include informal textual citations. Good memos report on and briefly engage some of the reading's main assumptions, arguments, and conclusions. Memos will be evaluated with a pass, pass-minus, or failing grade. If a memo is not turned in at the beginning of class on the due date it counts as a failure. Students who fail four or fewer of the fourteen memos will receive an "A" for their memo grade (above 95 with more than 10 good passes, below 95 if pass-minus grades must be counted). *With fewer than 10 passes, the memo grade declines steeply* ("B" for 9 passes, "C" for 8 passes, etc.). Students are advised not to miss any memos in the first few weeks. I'll give extra guidance on the first ones; also, **the grading scheme holds through the semester even if memo work is missed from illness or other necessity.**

Required books will be available at the UIC Bookstore. See Blackboard for other materials as they are posted (use only these assigned editions, please).

Essays

Two essays on assigned topics will be due on the dates designated below. Essays should be 1500-2000 words in length; late essays will be penalized. All memo and essay writing must, of course, be your own and follow standard citation procedures.* Feel free to consult with me during office hours or by appointment for help with any additional writing questions or problems or other concerns.

***Plagiarism**

Plagiarism rates for memos and essays are rising in my classes; I assume that this is

because of students' increasing reliance on the world wide web. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense; it is grounds for automatic course failure and can be grounds for dismissal from the university. For tips on how to use proper citation, and for answers to questions about plagiarism see <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054>

The open internet is not a good resource for critical writing. You are not being given research assignments; thus you do not need to study anything beyond the syllabus in order to do excellent work for this course, and most of you are more likely to do excellent work if you ignore secondary sources altogether. Read and reread the primary sources; if you feel that you must have additional guidance on the readings or you are curious about surrounding debates, go to the UIC library (or use its internet portal), where there is a wealth of published material that you can consult. I will be happy to help you to find sources of high quality, but I would prefer that you focus on the primary materials and first work through any comprehension difficulties with me and with your classmates.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 11

- Introduction
- Levitsky and Ziblatt, "Is Donald Trump a Threat to Democracy?"
- Runciman, "Is This How Democracy Ends?"

January 18

- Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration"
- Plato, *Protagoras* excerpt
- Constant, "On Ancient and Modern Liberty"
- Pitkin, "Representation and Democracy: Uneasy Alliance"
- Gage, "Who Is the 'Forgotten Man'?"
- **MEMO 1 DUE**

January 25

- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII excerpt, Book VIII
- Sullivan, "Democracies End When They Are Too Democratic"
- Donald Trump's Inaugural Address
- **MEMO 2 DUE; PAPER 1 ASSIGNED (DUE FEB. 27; OPTIONAL DRAFT DUE BY FEB. 9)**

February 1

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Book II chs. 1-5
- Barack Obama's Farewell Address
- **MEMO 3 DUE**

February 8

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III chs. 1-12, Book IV chs. 1-11
- **MEMO 4 DUE**

February 15

- Sieyes, “What Is the Third Estate?”
- Bentham, “Of Publicity”
- Paine, *The Rights of Man* excerpts
- More, *Village Politics*
- Thompson and Wheeler, *An Appeal of One Half the Human Race* excerpts
- The People’s Charter of 1839
- **MEMO 5 DUE**

February 22

- Declaration of Independence
- *The Constitution of the United States* (recommended only)
- Publius, *The Federalist* 9, 10, 47, 48, 49, 51, 78
- Fisher, *Constitutional Dialogues*, ch. 7 and Conclusion
- **MEMO 6 DUE; PAPER DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 27 BY 5:00 P.M.**

March 1

- Dahl et al., *The Democracy Sourcebook*, pp. 1-53
- **MEMO 7 DUE**

March 8

- Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (UIC Bookstore)
- **MEMO 8 DUE**

March 15

- Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy*, ch. 2 (Habermas excerpt)
- Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, chs. 2 and 4
- **MEMO 9 DUE**

--SPRING BREAK--

March 29

- Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, chs. 1-3, 6 and Epilogue (UIC Bookstore)
- **MEMO 10 DUE**

April 5

- Pocock, “The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times”
- Shklar, “American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion”
- Hochschild, “I Spent 5 Years With Some of Trump’s Biggest Fans”
- **MEMO 11 DUE; PAPER 2 ASSIGNED, DUE FRIDAY MAY 5 (OPTIONAL DRAFT DUE BY APRIL 21)**

April 12

- Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*, chs. 1 and 2
- Cohen, *Democracy Remixed*, chs. 1 and 2
- **MEMO 12 DUE**

April 19

- Müller, *What Is Populism?* (UIC Bookstore)
- **MEMO 13 DUE**

April 26

- Rancière, “The Uses of Democracy”
- Rancière, *Disagreement* chs. 1 and 2
- **MEMO 14 DUE**

Papers due by 5 p.m., Friday, May 5 (hard copy in my office or mailbox, please)

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAMINATION FOR THIS COURSE