

Democratic Theory and Practice

Summer Term 2021

Time: Monday, 16:00 – 17:30

Place: Online (via Zoom)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-3pm (by appointment)

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Statement on Exceptional Circumstances

The Covid-19 pandemic has created exceptional circumstances for everyone. Classes have been moved online and we are forced to stay at home to self-isolate. Moreover, many of us have to balance a lot of things right now: We are concerned about our loved ones; some of us are worried about our own health or livelihoods; others may be away from home in a foreign country.

Although this is not new to us anymore, it is still difficult for everyone involved. We have to manage our anxiety, handle a lot of distractions, and deal with technical glitches (that we will inevitable face). Please accept that this will (again!) be a difficult semester and do not expect too much from yourself or your classes. I can ensure you that I will take the current circumstances into account when grading this course, and I hope you will do the same when evaluating yourself.

That said, the current circumstances also provide an incredibly exciting opportunity to study *Democratic Theory and Practice*, and I hope that you will share my enthusiasm for this topic. It is my hope that with this course we will create an (online) community, which is a beacon of stability in turbulent times. Please be mindful and support each other, even as total strangers. I will do the same and I am looking forward to meeting all of you.

Introduction and Course Content

In the 21st century, the status of Western liberal democracy appears under threat at home and abroad. While populist movements gain ground in Europe and North America, the rising economic and diplomatic clout of non-democratic regimes like China and Russia presents the world with seemingly successful alternatives. This is becoming even more obvious in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is testing the limits of democracy in new ways. In this course, the questions that we will repeatedly return to are: What is democracy? Why is democracy worth defending? And what institutions and social conditions are necessary for the realization of the democratic ideal? The lecture course will be divided into three parts. The first part of the course

will provide students with a short overview of the development of democratic thought, ranging from liberal democracy to more recent radical and deliberative alternatives. The second part of the course will consider if and how phenomena like multiculturalism, globalization, and inequality present a challenge for the democratic ideal. The third part will evaluate the future of democracy in light of recent challenges from populism and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prerequisites

A good foundational knowledge of general political science concepts, theories, and basic qualitative and quantitative methods is expected. Moreover, you should be able to understand and express yourself in English, as this will be the classroom language – though perfection is neither expected nor required. The final exam will also be in English.

Learning Outcomes

The main expected “learning outcomes” of this seminar are for you to:

- become familiar with the different democratic theories and the kind of questions that empirical political scientists who study democracy ask;
- develop incisive and critical thinking about democracy and position yourself in key debates in the field;
- gain a deeper understanding of the democratic ideal and the challenges that this ideal faces in practice;
- describe how changing social and political conditions have affected the evolution of democratic practices;
- critically examine the value of democracy and consider how democracy can be protected;
- discuss the prospects for democracy in the 21st century;
- sharpen your analytical skills and improve your writing skills;
- clarify your own views on the value of democracy.

Course Structure

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this course will be delivered online using the software Zoom. At the beginning of the course, you will receive an invitation to participate in the lecture with a recurring link. To accommodate students who are unable to participate at the allotted time, recordings of each lecture will also be made available via ILIAS.

To facilitate discussion and engagement with the course content, there will be an online forum with weekly discussion questions, which enrolled students will be able to access through ILIAS. You are encouraged to post and engage with questions on this forum.

I will also be available to meet with you online during my office hours. Please book a slot for your meeting here: <https://calendly.com/bjoern-bremer>

Please also feel free to e-mail me with questions or concerns anytime.

Assessment

Your grade in this class will be based on a written examination. The exam will take place virtually via ILIAS and is preliminarily scheduled for 16 August 2021 (but this may be subject to change). For the exam, students should be familiar with all topics and texts covered during the course, and will be required to answer several short essay questions. More details about the exams will be provided in the lectures.

Readings

There are no required books for purchase for this course. All readings will be made available electronically to students via ILIAS. You will be expected to have completed all the assigned readings for the week before each session.

Course Schedule

Part 1: The Democratic Ideal

12 April: The Value of Democracy

- Richard Arneson. 2004. 'Democracy is not intrinsically just', in Keith Dowding, Robert Goodin and Carole Pateman (eds.), *Justice and Democracy*, pp. 40-58.
- Elizabeth Anderson. 2009. 'Democracy: Instrumental vs. non-instrumental value', in Thomas Christiano and John Christman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, pp. 213-227.
- Laura Valentini. 2012. 'Justice, disagreement and democracy.' *British Journal of Political Science* 43: 177-199.

19 April: The Nature and Origins of Representative Government

- Bernard Manin. 1997. *The Principles of Representative Government*, Introduction and chs. 2-4.

26 April: From Realist Theories of Democracy to Deliberative Democracy

- Robert Dahl. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, chs. 1-3 (skip the math).
- John Rawls. 2001. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, parts I, II and IV.
- Carole Pateman. 1976. *Participation and Democratic Theory*, chs. 1-3, 6.

Part 2: Democracy in Practice

3 May: Democracy and the Market

- Friedman, Milton. 1962. *Capitalism and Freedom*, chs. 1-2.
- Charles Lindblom. 1982. 'The market as prison.' *Journal of Politics* 44(2): 324-336.
- Streeck, Wolfgang. 2011. 'The crisis of democratic capitalism'. *New Left Review* 71(5): 5-29.
- Marcus Kurtz. 2004. 'The dilemmas of democracy in the open economy: Lessons from Latin America.' *World Politics* 56(2): 262-302.

10 May: Democracy, Growth, and Redistribution

- Carl H. Knutsen. 2012. 'Democracy and economic growth: A survey of arguments and results.' *International Area Studies Review* 15(4): 393-415.
- Michael Albertus and Victor Menaldo. 2013. 'Gaming democracy: Elite dominance during transition and the prospects for redistribution.' *British Journal of Political Science* 44: 575-603.
- Daron Acemoglu, Suresh Naidu, Pascual Restrepo and James A. Robinson. 2015. 'Democracy, redistribution and inequality', in the *Handbook of Income Distribution* 2: 1885-1966.

17 May: Democracy and Conflict

- Donald Horowitz. 1993. 'The challenge of ethnic conflict: Democracy in divided societies.' *Journal of Democracy* 4(4): 18-38.
- M. Steven Fish and Robin S. Brooks. 2004. 'Does diversity hurt democracy?' *Journal of Democracy* 15(1): 154-166.
- Kanchan Chandra. 2005. 'Ethnic parties and democratic stability.' *Perspectives on Politics* 3(2): 235-252.
- Adam Przeworski. 2011. 'Divided we stand? Democracy as a method of processing conflicts.' *Scandinavian Political Studies* 34(2): 168-182.

24 May: NO CLASS (*Pfingstferien*)

31 May: Minority Rights and Representation

- Jane Mansbridge. 1999. 'Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent yes.' *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-57.
- Iris Marion Young. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*, chs. 3-4.
- Will Kymlicka. 2001. 'The new debate over minority rights', in *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*.

7 June: Democracy and Parties

- Nancy Rosenblum. 2008. *On the Side of the Angels*, introduction, ch. 1, conclusion.
- Russ Muirhead. 2014. *The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age*, chs. 1-2.
- Peter Mair. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*, chs. 1-2.

14 June: The Problem of Unequal Representation

- Bartels, Larry. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, chs. 1, 8, 10 (second edition).
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2014): 564-81.
- Martin Gilens. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*, ch. 3.
- Mads Andreas Elkjær and Torben Iversen. 2020. 'The political representation of economic interests: Subversion of democracy or middle-class supremacy?' *World Politics* 72(2): 254-290.

21 June: The Problem of Citizen Competence

- Arthur Lupia and Matthew D. McCubbins. 2000. 'The institutional foundations of political competence: How citizens learn what they need to know', in Lupia et al. (eds.), *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*, pp. 47-66.
- Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaëli Bloch-Elkon. 2008. 'Do the facts speak for themselves? Partisan disagreement as a challenge to democratic competence.' *Critical Review* 20(1-2): 115-139.
- Jason Brennan. 2011. 'The right to a competent electorate.' *The Philosophical Quarterly* 61(245): 700-724.
- Hélène Landemore. 2012. 'Why the many are smarter than the few and why it matters.' *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8(1): 7.

Part 3: Challenges to Democracy

28 June: The Populist Challenge to Democracy

- Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens. 2007. 'Populism versus democracy.' *Political Studies* 55(2): 405-424.
- Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2012. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy*, chs. 1 and 10.
- Chantal Mouffe. 2019. *For A Left Populism*, chs. 3-4.

5 July: How Democracies Die

- Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018): chs. 1-2, 9.
- Podcast: Transformation of European Politics Podcast, Episode 12 (with Daniel Ziblatt): <https://soundcloud.com/user-467531770/episode-12-daniel-ziblatt-how-democracies-die>

12 July: COVID-19 and the Future of Democracy

- Amartya Sen. 1999. 'Democracy as a universal value.' *Journal of Democracy* 10(3): 3-17.
- Daniel Bell. 2015. *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*, chs. 1-2.
- Readings on COVID-19 and democracy (to be announced)

16 August: Final exam (via Ilias, date and time to be confirmed)