

Political Science 4430

Senior Seminar in Political Science

Dr. Tracy L. R. Lightcap

Office: Room 204, Callaway Academic Building

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 11:00 - 12:00 am or by appointment.

Required Materials

All the following are required books:

Anthony Arblaster. 2002. *Democracy*. New York: OpenUniversity. 3rd edition.

John Gaventa. 1982. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. 2005. *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*. New Haven: Yale.

Robert Putnam. 1994. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University.

Ashwin Desai. 2002. *We Are the Poors*. New York: Monthly Review.

All these books can be found in the bookstore. We will also be reading some articles on reserve at the Banks Library.

Course Objectives

This course will be different from the other courses you have had in political science here at LaGrange College. It is aimed at getting you to integrate some of the many concepts and theories you have learned in your political science courses. You will not be talking about “comparative politics,” or “international politics,” or “judicial politics;” instead you will be talking about *politics*.

To accomplish this we will have to concentrate our efforts; an attempt to uncover general universals of politics could leave us floating in the ether. Instead, we will be looking at the meaning, origins, problems, and future of the main type of government we are familiar with: democracy. In particular, we will try to understand the recent shift toward democracy around the world and the forces producing and sustaining democratic rule in general. Some of the specific questions we will seek to address are:

... What exactly do we mean by the word democracy? What are some of the definitions of that political scientists and practitioners have used over the years? What are some of the normative and empirical implications of the common definitions of the term?

... What are the empirical conditions that tend to support or undermine democratic regimes? How did these forces operate in historical cases? What is the portent of such considerations for present democratic governments?

... What is the likely future of democracy in an interdependent and disorderly world?

The readings for the course are a sample of the best recent and classical work on democracy and democratization. The readings will not answer our questions, but they will allow us to see the outlines of present speculations on democracies.

Your work in this course will require the use of different perspectives and creative thinking. In the end, it should help you acquire the skills to use the knowledge you have acquired to synthesize information and analyze political events.

Course Requirements

Assignments

This is a *seminar* course. Seminars entail a new form of education for most of you. So what distinguishes a seminar from a usual lecture or laboratory course?

... *PARTICIPATION*;

... *COOPERATION*;

... *CRITICAL READING* (I define this elsewhere!!);

... *LEADERSHIP*; or, to put it short,

... *SCHOLARLY COMMITMENT*

I have formulated the requirements for the course accordingly. *First*, each of you will *co-lead* two class meetings. (For some guidelines, see the appendix of this syllabus.) This co-leadership (I'm the other co, of course) and your overall class participation will be 30% of your course grade. *Second*, you must complete a *major research paper* on some aspect of democracy that interests you and that I find acceptable. You must tell me what your topic is by April 10. I'll give you a further handout about the paper later, but you should be at a point by now that this should be second nature.

The paper will constitute *40%* of your course grade. *Third*, there will be a *final take-home examination* in the course. The final examination will be *integrative*; that is, it will call on you to use the knowledge you should have gained from the course to address a new question. The final examination will count for *30%* of your final grade.

In addition, each of you will be responsible for submitting a *weekly essay* concerning the work assigned for each week. These essays should be no more than two (that's 2) typewritten pages in length and will be due on TUESDAY of each week. Essays can be in several different forms: responses to questions that occur to you while reading, critiques of arguments made by authors, applications of concepts to current public issues ... the number of possibilities is very great. These essays will be graded on a pass/fail basis, but failing to hand in an essay each week will decrease your course grade by a step (B to C and so on) for each essay missed. On the other hand, you do not have to turn in an essay for the weeks you co-lead a class or for the session where papers will be presented.

Dates to Remember

Weekly Essays Due Every TUESDAY

Research Paper Topic Due April 10

Research Paper Due May 1

Panel Presentation May 8

Final Examination Due May 13 at 3:00 pm

Attendance

I will take attendance at each class. Since this is a class that will only meet once a week (usually) and demands participation to work, you will be allowed **one (that's 1)** unexcused absence. Any more will result in instant withdrawal from the course (either a "W" or "WF", depending). Further, you *cannot* miss class on a day you are slated to co-lead. Since this course is required for graduation with a political science major, I would seriously advise you not to test me on this one! Lateness and lack of preparation will not be tolerated either.

Course Outline

The course will follow the outline below, with each section approximating a week's work. I will make every effort to stick to this schedule, but if revisions are required I

will inform you before hand. If we must reschedule any aspect of this syllabus, you and your classmates will be consulted.

1. Introduction (Feb 6)

2. What Democracy Is ... and Isn't (Feb 15)

Anthony Arblaster. 1999. *Democracy*.

3. Preconceptions about Democracy (Feb 22)

Brian Berry. 1979. "Is Democracy Special?" In *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*, eds. Peter Laslett and James Fishkin. New Haven: Yale.

Ronald Dworkin. 1979. "We Do Not Have a Right to Liberty." In *Readings In Social and Political Philosophy*, ed. Robert Stewart. New York: Oxford.

Carol Pateman. 1988. "The Fraternal Social Contract." In *Civil Society and the State*, ed. John Keane. London: Verso.

4. Democracy, Participation, and Power (Mar 1)

John Gaventa. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*.

5. Democracy and Governance (Mar 8)

Robert Putnam. *Making Democracy Work*.

6. The Failure of Democracy (Mar 15)

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*.

7. Experience In the New Democracies (Mar 22)

Claus Offe. 1991. "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe." *Social Research* 58 (4): 865 - 892.

Ashwin Desai. *We Are the Poors*.

8. So ... How's the research going? (Mar 29)

9. So ... How's the research going? (Apr 12)

10. So ... How's the research going? (Apr 19)

11. So ... How's the research going? (Apr 26)

12. So ... You've got your paper with you, right? (May 1)

13. Panel Presentation (May 8)

Final Examination Distributed: May 8 - time to be determined

Final Examination Due: May 13 at 3:00 pm

APPENDIX

CO-LEADING A SEMINAR

What better way to show that you have gotten a liberal arts education than to make your teacher dispensable! You can (believe it) teach yourself and others about a new topic. The following are some reminders about how to do it.

1. Critical reading, along with its brother, critical thinking, have become buzz words throughout American education. As is often the case, this is a fancy term for a set of simple ideas. To read a book or article critically, you must answer a series of questions:

... What is the author's purpose? What goals does he or she want to achieve?

... What means does the author select to accomplish his or her goals? (Why does Plato use dramatic dialogues, for instance?)

... What body of literature or belief does the author attack or support? On what grounds?

... What hypotheses or arguments are advanced?

... What is the most important evidence for the main argument?

... What subarguments contribute to the main argument? Is there sound evidence supporting them as well?

... What problems does a critique of the book reveal? Are there shortcomings, logical errors, misused or faulty arguments?

... Did reading this book lead you to any new insights? What were they?

2. Keeping these ideas in mind, read the book and papers you were assigned.

3. At least two class days before your session (i.e. Friday), meet with me and be prepared to discuss how we should lead the seminar. Seminars are cooperative, not competitive; you will be evaluated on how well you help the others to understand the materials. To that end, keep this in mind:

... What are the most important points these materials make? What do I want my fellow students to get out of them?

... What would the best method be for getting these points across? Lecturing is out; but given that, what questions, tactics, methods, dirty tricks, ect. should we use? Also, how are you going to get everyone to say at least one thing at your session?

... How can we get seminar members to bring out the relevant ideas they have learned from other courses? The whole point is to get you to bring the substantive and theoretical knowledge you have acquired to bear on a set of serious questions.

... You must be prepared to summarize the most important points you wanted to emphasize. Of course, you must be ready to address any disagreements as well.

I will give you my assessment of your performance after each session, based on a short evaluation form. I will also ask your fellow students to give us a paragraph or so of their own thoughts for us to mull over. And, please pay heed to ...

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SEMINARS

(with apologies to Prof. Timothy O'Neill of Southwestern University)

1. THOU SHALT NOT B.S.

Saying "I don't know" is infinitely preferable to bluffing.

2. THOU SHALT NOT ATTACK THE AUTHOR OR SPEAKER

Saying, for instance, that Marx was sexist (so near as we can tell he was) doesn't tell us much about the validity of his ideas. It might be illuminating if combined with other information, but it is no excuse to dismiss his work.

3. THOU SHALT NOT PLEAD TO COMMON KNOWLEDGE

"We all know that ..." any sentence that begins like this won't tell us much about the validity of a position.

4. THOU SHALT SPEAK UP AT LEAST ONCE IN EVERY SESSION

5. THOU SHALT READ THE ASSIGNED MATERIAL

This doesn't mean you can't use other sources that summarize a difficult position, but you have to be prepared to support your assertions.

6. THOU SHALT TEACH

7. THOU SHALT NOT PLAGIARIZE

8. THOU SHALT TAKE RISKS

This is your chance to try all the ideas you must have had while we were droning away at you all these years! Try the techniques and ideas that helped you learn the best in the past.

9. THOU SHALT HONOR THY PEERS

Learn to respect their strengths and tolerate their failings.

10. THOU SHALT STOP WHEN THOU HAST NOTHING ELSE TO SAY

I saved the hardest one for last.