

DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTY

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

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Description:

The citizens of democracies take pride in their countries, believing them to be beacons of liberty. In other parts of the world, activists, rallying behind the banners of “freedom” and “democracy,” bravely defy dictators. But what do we mean when we call a country a democracy? What does liberty actually consist in? And why, exactly, is it that we believe democracies to be freer than any other political system?

Drawing both on texts from the history of political thought and on contemporary normative debates, this course examines these fundamental questions.

Course Policies:

Readings:

The readings for this course are designed to be manageable. As you will see, there are usually no more than 50 pages per session, and never more than 100. This is because we will be discussing each assigned text in detail during class. I therefore expect that you *carefully* read all assignments for each session.

But you have a “get-out-of-jail-free” card. Papers, mid-terms, extra-curricular activities and, well, life happens. So, *once* during the term, you are welcome to email me before class to say that you haven’t managed to do the readings; your participation grade will not be affected.

Leading Discussion:

Each student will be responsible for leading the class through one of the assigned readings. This is *not* a standard presentation: I don’t expect you to present your own thoughts on the reading, or even to talk very much.

Rather, I would like you to *facilitate discussion* for ten to fifteen minutes. Your responsibility is to read the text very carefully and prepare a number of questions about it. Your goal is for your classmates to understand the argumentative strategy employed in the text as well as possible, and to start debating how persuasive they find it.

Blog:

We will have a course-wide blog for you to share interesting thoughts you have about the readings with your classmates.

I encourage you to jot something down whenever the fancy strikes you. As a minimum, however, I require three blog entries from each of you: one for Part I (Weeks 1 – 3); one for Part II (Weeks 4 – 7); and one for Part III (Weeks 8 – 12) of the course.

Meetings:

About a week before each paper is due, we will have a one-on-one meeting to discuss what you would like to write about, which texts you will use to build your case, and how you will structure your argument. Don't worry if your ideas are still preliminary or a little chaotic at this stage: the only purpose of these meetings is to help you write the best possible essay.

Draft Exchange:

There are two very simple ways to improve your writing: 1) Write a draft of your paper, let it lie for a few days, then thoroughly revise it before handing it in; and 2) Get a friend to give you feedback.

To encourage these habits, you will be assigned an “editor” in the class. Four days before the official due date of your first paper, you and your editor will exchange papers and provide each other with written comments. This should give you plenty of time to revise your paper and incorporate your editor's advice.

This is not an invitation to plagiarize, or to co-write papers. When you are sending your partner written comments, I would like you to email me a copy. We will have an in-class discussion about what kind of cooperation is allowed before the first paper is due.

Assignments:

This is a writing-intensive class. You will be required to write one paper for each segment of the course: a short paper of five to seven pages that relates to liberty; a short paper of five to seven pages that relates to democracy; and a long paper of ten to twelve pages that discusses the connection between liberty and democracy.

Your grade will be determined by four components:

- Class Participation, Leading Discussion, and Blog Entries: 20%
- First Paper (Short): 20%
- Second Paper (Short): 20%
- Final Paper (Long): 40%

Readings:

Part 1 – Liberty

Week 1 – “Liberty” in Modern Political Thought

Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*, Ch. XXI.

James Harrington: *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, Short Excerpt.

John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. IV, Short Excerpt.

Baron de Montesquieu: *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book XI, Chs 1-7; Book XII, Chs. 1-13.

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*, Ch. 1.

Week 2 – “Negative Liberty”

Benjamin Constant: “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns.”

Isaiah Berlin: “Two Concepts of Liberty.”

Friedrich Hayek: *The Constitution of Liberty*, Excerpt.

Week 3 – “Positive” and “Republican” Liberty

Charles Taylor: “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty?”

Quentin Skinner: “A Third Concept of Liberty.”

Philip Pettit: *Republicanism*, Chapter 2.

Recommended:

Gerald MacCallum: “Negative and Positive Freedom.”

First short paper due.

Part 2: Democracy

Week 4 – “Democracy” in the Ancient World

Thucydides: *Peloponnesian War*, Book II.34-46.

Plato: *The Republic*, Book VIII.

Polybius: *Histories*, Book VI, Excerpt.

Aristotle: *The Politics*, Book VII.

Week 5 – Democracy vs. Republicanism

The U.S. Constitution.

John Adams: “Marchamont Nedham. The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth Examined,” Excerpt.

The Federalist Papers: X, XIV, XXXIX.

Bernard Manin: *Principles of Representative Government*, Ch. 1.

Recommended:

Bernard Manin: *Principles of Representative Government*, Ch. 4.

Week 6 – Minimalist Democracy vs. The General Good

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *The Social Contract*, Book I.

Edmund Burke: “Speech to the Electors of Bristol.”

Joseph Schumpeter: *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, “The Classical Doctrine of Democracy” and “Another Theory of Democracy.”

Recommended:

Adam Przeworski: “Minimal Conception of Democracy: A Defense.”

Week 7 – Deliberative Democracy

Amy Gutmann & Dennis Thompson: *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, pp. 1-21; 40-56.

John Rawls: “The Idea of Public Reason, Revisited.”

Recommended:

Jon Elster: “The Forum and the Market – Three Varieties of Political Theory.”

Second short paper due.

Part 3: How Are Liberty and Democracy Related?

Week 8 – Liberalism

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*, Ch. 2.

John Rawls: *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Excerpts.

Week 8 – Constitutionalism

Ronald Dworkin: *Sovereign Virtue*, pp. 184-203.

Jeremy Waldron: “The Core of the Case against Judicial Review.”

Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith, Scalia’s opinion, Parts I and IIA; O’Connor’s concurrence, Parts IIA and IIB.

Week 10 – Republicanism and Communitarianism

Philip Pettit: *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Chs. 3+6.

Charles Taylor: “Democratic Exclusion (and its Remedies?)”

Michael Sandel: “Political Liberalism.”

Week 11 – Welfare

T. H. Marshall: “Citizenship and Social Class.”

Fareed Zakaria: “A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew,” Excerpt.

Amartya Sen: *Development as Freedom*, Excerpt.

Week 12: Final Class Discussion

No Reading.

Final paper due.