# IDS 2935: What is Democracy?

## Quest 1: Justice and Power

## I. General Information

### Class Meetings

- Spring 2025
- Required 100% In–Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- Tuesdays 10:40–11:30, Leigh Hall 242
- Thursdays 10:40–12:35 Anderson Hall 32
- 3 Credits

### Instructor


- Adam Lebovitz
- CSE E548
- Office hours: Mondays 11 am – 1 pm, and by appointment
- adamlebovitz@ufl.edu
- 352.294.7827


If you need to schedule an appointment outside of office hours, please email the course instructor.

### Course Description

Few terms enjoy broader acceptance today than "democracy." In the United States, it is commonly spoken of as our highest civic ideal, often accompanied by warnings that it is "under threat." Internationally it is often taken as a byword for legitimacy, so that even the most authoritarian governments claim publicly to be democracies, often going so far as to hold dubious elections to further the illusion. The nearly unanimous approval accorded to "democracy" today makes it easy to forget that, for several millennia, it was one of the most controversial terms in politics, frequently used as an epithet to describe anarchy and mob rule. The self–identification of most governments today as "democracies" also occludes the fact that, over the past 2500 years, this word has undergone several notable somersaults in meaning. It is unlikely that the Greeks, for example, would describe the present–day United States as a democracy, given its near–total reliance on elected representatives to craft and enforce its laws. But perhaps the greatest complication in invoking democracy today is that few theorists can agree on the word's meaning. Does it signify direct rule by the people in a massive assembly? Rule by elected representatives? A social system in which all individuals enjoy equal status, regardless of race, religion, or gender? Rule by (or in the interest of) the many poor? While the meanings assigned to "democracy" have shifted dramatically over time, this charged word

has always been a vehicle for working out our highest ideals, and our darkest fears, in the realm of politics.

This course traces the changing ideal of "democracy" from ancient Athens to the present day, drawing on classic works by Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Tocqueville, and Arendt. It studies the development of this idea over time, and charts the dizzying variety of meanings that have been assigned to it, while also engaging with the arguments of its sharpest and most perceptive critics. Students will leave the course with a wide understanding of the history of democracy, a deep familiarity with the positions of its leading advocates and critics, and a set of tools for thinking carefully and critically about democracy in the present.

## Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

*This course accomplishes the Quest and General Education objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S–U.*

*The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.*

*Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.*

## Required Readings and Works

- Required Readings:
    1. Jean–Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (1762), Donald A. Cress trans. (Indianapolis, 2019)
    2. John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2d. ed., Princeton, 2018)
- Additional *required* readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas.
- The writing manual for this course is: *The Economist Style Guide*, 11th edn. (2015). ISBN: 9781610395755. This is available as a PDF on Canvas.
- Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A

# II. Graded Work

## Description of Graded Work

1. **Active Participation and Attendance:** 25%
    a. **Participation:**
        i. An exemplary participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)
    b. **Class Attendance:**
        i. On–time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. Class attendance will be recorded daily. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty, but starting with the third class missed your grade will be affected. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A– becomes a B, and so on.
        ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.

2. **Experiential Learning Component: Outside Lecture:** 15%
    a. During the semester, students will be responsible for identifying one public lecture, given by either a UF faculty member or a visiting lecturer, pertaining to the themes of this course. Each student will attend the lecture, and write a 750–1000 word essay summarizing its contents and evaluating its argument in light of *at least one* of the readings discussed in our course. The instructor will publicize different lectures over the course of the term which might fulfill the requirement, but students are also free to attend a lecture of their choice, provided that it matches the themes of the course. Students unsure whether a lecture qualifies should check with the instructor.
    b. Students are encouraged to complete this assignment earlier rather than later in the semester, but the final due date is **April 1** at 5 pm EST.

3. **Midterm Quizzes:** 30%
    a. Midterm quizzes will be held on **Tuesday, February 11** and **Thursday, March 13**. Each quiz will be fifty minutes and will be written by hand in Bluebooks.
    b. Each quiz will count for 15% of the final grade.

4. **Final Essay:** 30%
    a. A final essay of 1250–1500 words will be due on **Tuesday, April 23**, at **11:59 pm**.
    b. Written feedback will be provided on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.

## III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

### Introduction (Tuesday, January 14)

Our first session has three goals: (1) meeting one another (2) outlining the major themes of the course (3) going over the syllabus and course requirements.

## WEEK 1: ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY: FOUNDATIONS (JANUARY 16)

The word 'democracy' was coined in Athens to describe a new political order that crystallized at the end of the sixth century BCE, in which all essential decisions were made by citizens and their elected magistrates. Athenian democracy attracted an enormous amount of attention, positive and negative, in its own time. It was praised by many observers for the freedom, equality, and political agency that it made possible; it was criticized by many others as amounting to little better than mob rule. These debates have lost little of their salience in the intervening 2500 years, even if our modern ideas about 'democracy' differ from the Athenian model in significant ways.

Today we will consider two readings that illustrate how leading Athenian orators thought about their own democracy—its moral and theoretical underpinnings, its unique advantages, and its points of frailty. Taken together, they underscore the values that Athenians thought their democracy exemplified, including individual liberty, civic equality, the rule of law, and military greatness. These readings also raise the difficult question of how a regime founded on the principle of civic equality should relate to elites, those possessing some special distinction, privileges, or set of abilities. What must it do to contain the threat they pose, and how can it harness their skills and ambitions for the public good?

**Readings (54 pages)**

1. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (c. 400 BCE), in *The Landmark Thucydides* Richard Crawley trans., Richard B. Strassler ed. (New York, 1998), Book 2.34–46, 2.59–65
2. Demosthenes, "Against Meidias" (361 BCE), *Orations, Volume III*, J.H. Vince trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1935), 1–21 (pp. 6–21), 143–49 (pp. 101–103), 157–59 (pp. 109–111), 202–227 (pp. 137–51). [link]

## WEEK 2: ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY: CRITICS (JANUARY 21, 23)

Last week we looked at speeches by two of Athens' greatest orators for clues about how Athenians thought about their own democracy. This week we will examine three critiques of Athenian democracy, which question whether democracy can ever be an effective or just form of government. Plato and "Xenophon" contribute a series of overlapping criticisms of democracy, all of which would echo in the subsequent history of political thought: democracy's lack of expertise, its mutability, its self–destructive jealousy of the talented and distinguished, and its dangerous disregard of individual rights. Finally, Isocrates offers an ambivalent defense of democracy, suggesting that it would be placed on a stronger foundation if it took seriously the need for a guiding elite.

**Readings (71 pages):**

1. Pseudo–Xenophon, "The Constitution of the Athenians" (c. 406 BCE), *Hiero. Agesilaus. Constitution of the Lacedaemonians. Ways and Means. Cavalry Commander. Art of Horsemanship. On Hunting. Constitution of the Athenians.*, E.C. Marchant trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1984), entire text, pp. 475–507. [link]
2. Plato, *The Republic* (c. 375 BCE), Book VIII, Allan Bloom trans. (2d. ed., New York, 1991), pp. 221–249.
3. Isocrates, "Areopagiticus" (355 BCE), *Isocrates, Volume II*, George Norlin trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1929), entire text (pp. 105–157). [link]

## WEEK 3: MACHIAVELLI (JANUARY 28, 30)

Few writers are as foundational to the history of free governments as Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), a Florentine writer and diplomat who was involved in the government of the Florentine Republic. Machiavelli was perhaps the most important political theorist of the Italian Renaissance, a period when the history, art, and literature of ancient Rome was rediscovered, and invested with new importance and fascination. And so it is natural that Machiavelli, in his *Discourses on Livy* (c. 1517), would try to extract general political principles from the experience and history of ancient Rome, as recorded by the Roman historian Livy. But the *Discourses* is not a simple commentary on Livy, and Machiavelli ranges widely across Roman and Italian history in search of the principles necessary to a free and successful republic.

One question we will ask this week is whether Machiavelli is an important source for thinking about the history of democracy. On the one hand, he did not describe his preferred political form as a "democracy," and was relatively uninterested in the history of democratic Athens. He also had a strong sense of the occasional need for executive leadership, a theme he developed extensively in his 1513 book *The Prince*. On the other hand, he makes clear throughout the *Discourses* that his preferred political form is a free republic in which ordinary people have the final word.

**Readings (55 pages):**
Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (c. 1517), Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov trans. and eds. (Chicago, 1996):

- Preface and I.1–10 (pp. 5–34)
- I.28 (pp. 63–64)
- I.44 (pp. 92–93)
- I.47 (pp. 96–99)
- I.56–57 (pp. 109–114)
- II.4 (pp. 135–38)
- III.1 (pp. 209–13)
- III.3 (pp. 214–15)
- III.34 (pp. 285–87)
- III.47 (p. 307)

## WEEK 4: HOBBES AND SPINOZA (FEBRUARY 4, 6)

Athenian democracy was extinguished in 322 BCE, following an invasion by Philip of Macedon. In the ensuing centuries the ideal of democracy would be severely discredited by the celebrated attacks of Plato and Aristotle, with the result that for nearly 2000 years 'democracy' was viewed as a pathological form of government. Even philosophers like Machiavelli, who trumpeted their populist and republican credentials, were reluctant to associate themselves with the controversial language of 'democracy', and rarely spoke of Athens as a model.

Democracy would reappear as an ideal in the seventeenth century, spurred by the political arguments surrounding the English Civil War. Ironically, the most important contributor to the revival of democracy would be Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the century's preeminent royalist philosopher. Hobbes outlined a theory of the social contract, in which democracy was the original reform, and while he thought that it was less than ideal as a system, he conceded that it was entirely legitimate. His insights would be developed by the Dutch–Jewish philosopher Spinoza (1632–77) several decades later, the first major philosopher in centuries to make *democracy* the name of his ideal republic.

**Readings (69 pages):**

1. Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen* (1642), Michael Silverthorne trans., Richard Tuck ed. (Cambridge, 1998)
    a. Chapter VII (pp. 91–102)
    b. Chapter X (pp. 115–26)
    c. Chapter XII (pp. 131–41)
2. Baruch Spinoza, *Theological–Political Treatise* (1670), *Complete Works*, Samuel Shirley trans., Michael L. Morgan ed. (Indianapolis, 2002)
    a. Chapters 16–17 (pp. 526–52)
    b. Chapter 20 (pp. 566–72)
3. Baruch Spinoza, *Political Treatise* (1677), *Complete Works*, Samuel Shirley trans., Michael L. Morgan ed. (Indianapolis, 2002)
    a. Chapter 11 (pp. 752–754).

## WEEK 5: ROUSSEAU (FEBRUARY 11, 13)

The Genevan–born polymath Jean–Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was one of the most celebrated writers of Europe's Age of Enlightenment. He won fame for his art criticism, his best–selling novels and memoirs, his writings on education, and his musical compositions, but he is best remembered today for his pathbreaking works of social and political theory. His 1762 *Social Contract*, an exploration of the history and theory of popular sovereignty, deeply impressed its readers with its ambitious effort to translate the idea of ancient democracy into the modern world. It was widely praised, and provided crucial inspiration for the democratic revolutions that followed its publication in Europe and North America. This week we will read the first three books of the *Social Contract*, which sets out a number of ideas that would prove fundamental to future thinking about democracy. These included the tension between self–rule and representation, the difference between democracy and popular sovereignty, and the link between civic equality and equality of property. And we will devote considerable time to making sense of Rousseau's enigmatic idea of the "General Will."

**Readings (78 pages):**

1. Jean–Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (1762), Donald A. Cress trans. (Indianapolis, 2019), Foreword, Books I–III (pp. 3–81)

# WEEK 6: HAMILTON AND MADISON (FEBRUARY 18, 20)

**Tuesday, February 18: Midterm Quiz #1**

In a 1777 letter, a twenty–year old Alexander Hamilton (1757–1802), already recognized as one of the leading politicians and writers of the American Revolution, coined an evocative new phrase to describe his preferred form of government: 'representative democracy'. Today this phrase is a standard part of our political lexicon, but it would have seemed paradoxical to those familiar with the democracies of the ancient world, whose overarching principle was direct rule by the people.

If we want to understand how "democracy" came to mean something resembling our present–day political order, in which power is entrusted almost exclusively to elected representatives, we should turn to the *Federalist* essays that Hamilton wrote, with James Madison (1751–1836), to promote ratification of the Constitution, in 1787–88. These essays focus on four themes that are of particular interest to us in this course: (1) the reasons that democracy failed in the ancient world (2) whether a 'representative' government should resemble the people, or simply be elected by them (3) the relationship between political liberty and military power (4) the relationship between free government and the rights of minorities, including, above all, the rights of wealthy owners of property. Can we call the political order that they envisioned a "democracy," even if they themselves would resist this term?

**Readings (60 pages):**

1. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist* (1788), George W. Carey and James McClellan eds. (Indianapolis, 2001). [link]
    - Alexander Hamilton:
        - No. 1, pp. 1–4
        - No. 6, pp. 20–26
        - No. 15, pp. 68–75
        - No. 35, pp. 167–72
        - No. 70, pp. 362–369
    - James Madison:
        - No. 10, pp. 42–49
        - No. 38, pp. 186–193
        - No. 40, pp. 199–206
        - No. 51, pp. 267–272

## WEEK 7: SIEYES (FEBRUARY 25, 27)

The French Revolution is often credited as the wellspring of modern democracy, and with good reason. First, because it invented, or perfected, a series of institutions that we now associate with the essence of democracy, including universal manhood suffrage, political referendums, declarations of human rights, and advances in racial and gender equality. And second, because it was during the French Revolution that "democracy" first circulated widely among the people as the name for their preferred order of politics.

But on closer inspection, the relationship between the revolution and democracy is more complicated than it might appear. We will scrutinize that relationship this week as we read what is, by common consensus, the most important piece of political writing to emerge from the revolution, the pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* by the Abbé Sieyes (1748–1836). On the one hand, Sieyes offers a theory that seems foundational to modern ideas of democracy, explaining why inherited power can never be legitimate, and why all power in a society must be ultimately derived from the people. And on the other hand, Sieyes, like Hamilton and Madison, tends to avoid the language of democracy wherever possible, and articulates a political program of representative meritocracy that seems inescapably elitist. Is Sieyes's program recognizable to you in our politics today—and should we, unlike Sieyes, be comfortable naming it a "democracy"?

**Readings (71 pages):**

Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes, *What is the Third Estate?*, *Political Writings*, Michael Sonenscher trans. and ed. (Indianapolis, 2003), 92–162

## WEEK 8: TOCQUEVILLE: I (MARCH 4, 6)

In 1831, the twenty–six year old aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) left France for a nine–month tour of the United States of America. On his return he wrote *Democracy in America*, a sprawling meditation on the 'democracy' that he encountered there, which he published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840.

Tocqueville made two observations about the nature of democracy in the modern world which will be at the heart of our discussion this week. First, democracy was best understood not as a political system but as a set of mores and norms, a reigning spirit of the age. The new democratic spirit emphasized the moral equality of all individuals and their equal entitlement to participate in the key institutions of society; it was not strictly a question of forms of government. Second, democracy was an unstoppable force: there was no possibility of reversing its tide, and thereby returning to an earlier age of feudal and aristocratic values. Europe, too, should expect to become 'democratic' in the manner of America. As you read, note what Tocqueville sees as the dangers introduced by this new political order, above all what he calls 'tyranny of the majority', and what safeguards he thinks are necessary to counteract them.

**Readings (70 pages):**

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/40), Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop trans. and ed. (Chicago, 2002).
    - Introduction, pp. 84–95
    - Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 4, pp. 125–28
    - Volume 1, Part 2, Chapters 5–8, pp. 243–99

## WEEK 9: TOCQUEVILLE: II (MARCH 11, 13)

The first volume of *Democracy in America* made Tocqueville an instant celebrity when it was published in 1835. He then turned his attention to producing a second volume, integrating the notes from his voyage to America with his prodigious reading on the history and theory of free government, and his observation of European politics. 'The first book', he wrote in a note to himself, was 'more American than democratic. This one [will be] more democratic than American'. It is also notably more pessimistic; if Tocqueville had always harbored fears about the pathological political forms that democracy might bring to the surface, in the second volume these increasingly occupied the foreground.

The sources of disquiet we will consider this week include the emergence of a new 'industrial' aristocracy, the centralization of political power, and the pathological fixation on equality at the expense of liberty. These anxieties converge in the last two chapters of *Democracy in America*, where Tocqueville asks whether democracy may in fact be generating new forms of despotism, more terrible and dispiriting than any known before. What resources does Tocqueville identify in the American tradition that he thinks might serve as an antidote to these destructive tendencies?

**Readings (55 pages):**

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835/40), Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop trans. and ed. (Chicago, 2002).
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 1–2, pp. 507–12
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 5, pp. 518–21
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 8, pp. 529–32
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 10, pp. 534–36
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 16, pp. 550–51
    - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 19–20, pp. 555–61
    - Volume 2, Part 3, Chapter 2, pp. 567–69
    - Volume 2, Part 3, Chapters 12–13, pp. 602–607
    - Volume 2, Part 3, Chapter 21, pp. 636–46
    - Volume 2, Part 4, Chapter 3, pp. 669–71
    - Volume 2, Part 4, Chapters 6–8, pp. 686–702

**Thursday, March 13: Midterm Quiz #2**

## Week 10: Spring Break

## WEEK 11: SCHMITT (MARCH 25, 27)

Twentieth–century democracy had few critics more perceptive than Carl Schmitt (1888–1895), a German law professor who enjoyed great prominence in the Weimar Republic before joining the Nazi party in 1933. He was arrested by the Allies in 1945, and banned from teaching, though he continued to write and comment prolifically until his death in 1985.

We will look at one of Schmitt's sharpest tracts—his *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* from 1923, including the new Preface he wrote for its second edition in 1926. On what grounds does Schmitt perceive a contradiction between liberalism, constitutionalism, and democracy? Why does he take issue with what he calls the values of "openness and discussion"? And would it be possible to imagine a democracy organized along lines Schmitt might approve of?

We will sharpen the tension by reading a short essay from one of Schmitt's most perceptive critics, the liberal German law professor Richard Thoma, taking issue with many of Schmitt's core ideas.

**Readings (60 pages):**

1. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923), trans. and ed. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA, 1985), pp. 1–50
2. Richard Thoma, "On the Ideology of Parliamentarism," pp. 77–85

**FINAL ESSAY ABSTRACT DUE MARCH 25 AT 11:59 pm**

## WEEK 12: SCHUMPETER (APRIL 1 AND 3)

Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) was a gifted economist and Austrian émigré, who fled a teaching post in Germany in 1932 and taught economics at Harvard until his death in 1950. In 1943 he published *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy*, where he attacked the 'classical doctrine' of democracy as rule by the people and their representatives, in pursuit of the common good. This was highly unrealistic, he argued, since the people lacked the technical expertise necessary to have an informed opinion about questions such as foreign policy, or the proper rate of interest in central banks. To speak of the 'will of the people' in the face of this basic fact was to traffic in fiction. The true face of democracy, he urged, was a contest between elites, with specialized technical knowledge, to rule over the people with their own consent. It is often framed, for this reason, as a cynical and elitist picture of democracy. Are there, nevertheless, reasons to think that Schumpeter's theory of representative democracy makes greater space for values such as accountability than other, more idealistic accounts?

**Readings (52 pages):**

- Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy* (1943) (3d. ed., New York: Routledge, 1976), 250–302

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ESSAY DUE April 1, 5 pm EST**

## WEEK 13: ARENDT (APRIL 8 AND 10)

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), a German émigré who arrived in the United States in 1941, made her reputation in 1951 with the publication of her philosophical history *Origins of Totalitarianism*, and thereafter enjoyed a number of prominent university posts in the United States, where she taught the history of political philosophy, until her death in 1975. More than any of her contemporaries in the United States or Europe, she was committed to reviving what she understood to be the positive legacy of Athenian democracy, retrofitting these ideas for a modern world of baffling technical complexity and existential stakes.

In her book *On Revolution*, published in 1963, she considered at length the lessons of the American and the French Revolutions, asking what insights might be mined from these experiences for a West gripped by uncertainty and self–doubt, and locked in a terrifying Cold War. We will consider the final chapter of this study, in which Arendt brings together the different threads of her study, and sketches some ways that the Greek experience of direct self–rule might be replicated in contemporary democracy. What supposedly 'Athenian' values is her system of direct democracy meant to preserve? Is her critique of representative democracy essentially Rousseauvean, or does she add some new element to the tradition?

**Readings (67 pages):**

1. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963) (New York: Penguin, 1990), pp. 215–281.

## WEEK 14: DUNN (APRIL 15 AND 17)

We will conclude the semester with two chapters from John Dunn's recent account *Setting the People Free*. Dunn is a political theorist, based at the University of Cambridge, and *Setting the People Free* is his effort to think about the history of democracy, using many of the sources we have considered, as well as the future of this highly–charged idea. Chapter 3 is a historical investigation of the problem of equality in a market economy, which has bedeviled democracy since the eighteenth century. Is the gap between a political system that treats every citizen as equal, and an economic system that insists on sharp inequalities, too vast to be bridged. Chapter 4 thinks about the applicability of classic texts on democracy, by Plato, Rousseau, Schumpeter, and many others, to the problems that democracies now confront in the twenty–first century, and in particular problems that occupy a global scale. Are there reasons to fear that democracy's long reign as the cornerstone of political legitimacy now coming to an end?

**Readings (67 pages):**

1. John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2d. ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 95–162

**FINAL ESSAY DUE TUESDAY, APRIL 23, AT 11:59 pm**

# IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

## Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see here.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 94 – 100% | | C | 74 – 76% |
| A– | 90 – 93% | | C– | 70 – 73% |
| B+ | 87 – 89% | | D+ | 67 – 69% |
| B | 84 – 86% | | D | 64 – 66% |
| B– | 80 – 83% | | D– | 60 – 63% |
| C+ | 77 – 79% | | E | <60 |

## Grading Rubrics

# Participation Rubric

| | |
|---|---|
| **A** (90–100%) | Typically comes to class with pre–prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion. |
| **B** (80–89%) | Does not always come to class with pre–prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation. |
| **C** (70–79%) | Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion. |
| **D** (60–69%) | Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is an unwilling participant in discussion. |
| **E** (<60%) | Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Refuses to participate in discussion. |

## Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

| | Completeness | Analysis | Evidence | Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** (90–100%) | Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely. | Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth. | Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings. | Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner. |
| **B** (80–89%) | Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely. | Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth. | Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly. | Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems. |
| **C** (70–79%) | Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question. | Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts. | Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task. | Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension. |
| **D** (60–69%) | Fails fully to answer the specific central question. | Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts. | Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings. | Organizational problems prevent comprehension. |
| **E** (<60%) | Does not answer the specific central question. | Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events. | Does not adduce any evidence. | Incomprehensible organization and prose. |

# Writing Rubric

| | Thesis and Argumentation | Use of Sources | Organization | Grammar, mechanics and style |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** (90–100%) | Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly. | Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout. | Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper. | No errors. |
| **B** (80–89%) | Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic. | Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly. | Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends. | A few errors. |
| **C** (70–79%) | Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support. | Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized. | Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends. | Some errors. |
| **D** (60–69%) | Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material. | Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent. | Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs. | Many errors. |
| **E** (<60%) | There is neither a thesis nor any argument. | Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent. | The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence. | Scores of errors. |

# V. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest the General Education student learning outcomes for Humanities (H).

Humanities (H) Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

**Content**: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine essential ideas about democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final analytical paper
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, Canvas posts, final analytical paper

**Critical Thinking**: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze the different definitions of "democracy" proposed over the millennia, and the flaws in each definition or conception of democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: active class participation, midterms, final analytical paper
- Analyze which critical or theoretical lenses are most appropriate to understand democracy in our own time. **Assessment**: active class participation, midterms, final essay

**Communication**: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: Canvas posts, final analytical paper
- Communicate well–supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on the nature of democracy (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** active class participation

**Connection**: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessment:** experiential learning component, final analytical paper
- Reflect on the requirements of democratic citizenship in class discussion and written work (Quest 1). **Assessment:** active class participation, experiential learning component, final analytical paper

# VI. Quest Learning Experiences

## 1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

During the semester, students will be responsible for identifying one public lecture, given by either a UF faculty member or a visiting lecturer, pertaining to the themes of this course. Each student will attend the lecture, and write a 500-word essay summarizing its contents, and evaluating its argument in light of *at least* one of the readings discussed in our course. This assignment gives students an opportunity to apply the concepts they have explored in this course to a new set of arguments about democracy, testing the usefulness of different conceptual frames for understanding contemporary debates.

## 2. Details of Self–Reflection Component

Self–reflection is built into many of the assignments, primarily through the reading questions that students create, the analytic essay assignment, and the democracy experiential learning assignment. In these opportunities for self–reflection offered by specific activities throughout the course, students will reflect on the broader implications of the themes of the course, considering the impact to themselves and/or to a wider community.

# VII. Required Policies

## Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make–up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found here.

## Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

## UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available here. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via this link. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at GatorEvals Public Data.