

Political Science 284: Democratic Theory
Fall 2019 ~ Wegman Hall 1005 ~ MW 11:50-1:05
Instructor: James Johnson
Office Hours: M 1:30-2:30 & W 9:30-10:30
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The course this year will focus on some intersections, actual and potential, between the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism and aspects of the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality among African Americans. We will be especially concerned with the multiple relationships between power, conflict, knowledge, education, expertise, and democracy. In effect, we will be asking of 'theory' holds or might hold in practice. In many respects our inquiry will be speculative; in all ways it will be tentative and subject to revision.

READINGS: The required reading for this course is difficult, it is diverse, and there is a lot of it. Moreover, none of the reading is presented in predigested textbook form. In both senses the reading load for this course might seem totally unreasonable! It is. My excuse is that the problems we will be addressing are crucially important and complex. In that sense, it is imperative that you do the reading and that you do so prior to class. I have ordered books (marked *) at the University Bookstore. All also are readily available from your preferred e-purveyor. I will make the other readings available via a course drop box file. A number of the assigned readings are, as is clear from the syllabus, available directly on line – I have provided links where this is the case.

I

* Barbara Ransby. 2003. *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. UNC Press.

II

*John Dewey. 1927. *The Public & Its Problems*. Swallow Press.

Charles S. Peirce. 1877. "The Fixation of Belief." In *The Pragmatism Reader*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

Charles S. Peirce. 1878. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." In *The Pragmatism Reader*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

John Dewey. 1939. "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us." In *The Pragmatism Reader*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

III

Jeffrey Isaac. 1999. "Is the Revival of Pragmatism Practical, or What Are the Consequences of Pragmatism?" *Constellations* 6: 561-587.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.. 2010. "The Problem of African American Public(s): Dewey and African American Politics in the 21st Century," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 7: 9–29.

Michael Dawson. 1994. "A Black Counterpublic?" *Public Culture* 7: 195-223.

Michael Dawson, et. al. 2012. "The Future of Black Politics," *Boston Review* (January-February) 12-30.

IV

* Roberto Mangabeira Unger. 2009. *The Left Alternative*. Verso. <http://www.robertounger.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/the-left-alternative.pdf>

Christopher Ansell. 2012. What is a "Democratic Experiment"? *Contemporary Pragmatism* 9: 159–180.

Jack Knight & James Johnson. 2007. "The Priority of Democracy: A Pragmatist Approach to Political-Economic Institutions and the Burden of Justification," *American Political Science Review* 101: 47-61.

Alexander Livingston. 2017. "Between Means and Ends: Reconstructing Coercion in Dewey's Democratic Theory," *APSR* 111:522-34.

Melvin Rogers. 2009. "Democracy, Elites and Power: John Dewey Reconsidered," *Contemporary Political Theory* 8: 68–89.

V

* Robert Moses & Charles Cobb. 2002. *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project*. Beacon Press. ISBN-10: 0807031275

W.V.O. Quine. 1981. "Success and Limits of Mathematization." In *Theories & Things*. Harvard University Press.

Andrew Hacker. 2012. "Is Algebra Necessary?" *The New York Times* (July 28th).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/opinion/sunday/is-algebranecessary.html?r=2>

Jeffrey Isaac. 1999. "The Algebra Project and Democratic Politics," *Dissent* 46:72-79.

VI

Myles Horton & Paolo Friere. 1990. *We Make the Road by Walking*. Temple University Press. [pages 67-95].

Septima Clarke. 1964. "Literacy & Liberation," *Freedomways* (Winter) 4:113-24.

David Thompson. 2016. "A Little Co-op Helped End Black Disenfranchisement," *The Post & Courier* (Charleston, SC; 13 February). https://www.postandcourier.com/opinion/a-little-co-op-helped-end-black-disenfranchisement/article_3da95a8f-f167-5703-b64c-de9ddd482e7c.html

Charles Payne. 1989. "Ella Baker and Models of Social Change," *Signs* 14: 885-899.

Charles Cobb. 1963 [1991]. "Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program," *The Radical Teacher* (Fall) #40: 36.

Charles Cobb. 2011. "Freedom's Struggle & Freedom Schools," *Monthly Review* (July-August) 63:104-113.

VII

* John Dewey. 1938. *Experience & Education*. Collier-Macmillan.

Tampio, Nicholas. 2016. "In Praise of Dewey," *Aeon* (July). <https://aeon.co/essays/dewey-knew-how-to-teach-democracy-and-we-must-not-forget-it>

Sarah Bruch and Joe Soss. 2018. "Schooling as a Formative Political Experience: Authority Relations and the Education of Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 16: 36-57.

* Jay Gillen. 2014. *Educating for Insurgency*. AK Press.

Charles Payne. 2010. "Miss Baker's Grandchildren: An Interview with the Baltimore Algebra Project," In *Quality Education as a Constitutional Right*. Edited by Theresa Perry, et. al. Beacon Press. [pages 3-32].

Eli Tucker-Raymond, et. al. 2016. "Opting in and Creating Demand: Why Young People Choose to Teach Mathematics to Each Other," *Journal of Science Education & Technology* 25:1025–1041.

Anna Marie Smith. 2013. "Reading Thurgood Marshall as a Liberal Democratic Theorist: Race, School Finance & the Courts." In *Education, Justice & Democracy*. Ed. D. Allen & R. Reich. U Chicago Press. [pages 243-66].

VIII

Peter Orszag. 2011. "Too Much of a Good Thing," *The New Republic* (6 October) 11–12.

Steven Epstein. 2000. "Democracy, Expertise & AIDS Treatment Activism." In *Science, Technology Democracy*. Edited by D.L. Kleinman. SUNY Press.

* Edward Tufte. 2002 [1992]. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. (2nd Edition) Graphics Press.

James Johnson. 2011. "Between Political Inquiry & Democratic Faith: A Pragmatist Approach to Visualizing Publics," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 3:167-85.

Philip Kitcher. 2006. "Public Knowledge and the Difficulties of Democracy," *Social Research* 73: 1205-24.

Elizabeth Anderson. 2007. "The Epistemology of Democracy," *Episteme* 3:8-22.

Elizabeth Anderson. 2011. "Democracy, Public Policy, and Lay Assessments of Scientific Testimony," *Episteme* 8: 144–164.

Michael Schulson & Samuel Bagg. 2019. "Give Power to Ordinary People," *Dissent* (July). https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/give-political-power-to-ordinary-people-sortition?fbclid=IwAR3Fe11JfUAacnyCh2NJ7tLHAqH2Cde5bH0FtHRfyb1xOWWUc66n3Z--QcMA

Grading: I do not care what grade you get in the course. By that I mean that while I would like you to do well, and hope that happens, whether you do so or not really depends on you. If you do the required work, it is extremely likely a good grade will follow; if not, it is almost certain that a good grade will not follow. The work here includes both participating in class discussion and writing a final paper.

Please note! There is no party line in the course, meaning I do not care if you agree or disagree with me, with one another, or with any (or all?) of the readings. I care about your willingness to stick your neck out, to think critically, and to articulate and defend *your* views clearly both orally and in writing.

Class participation: The course is small and will run as a seminar. Given the nature of the undertaking it is imperative that everyone actively participate in class. That means that I expect you not only to keep up with the reading, but also to read with care and to demonstrate this in class discussions. In order to insure that everyone has an opportunity to participate and that a small subset of the class does not dominate the discussion, I will call on students more or less at random. The regularity and quality of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion will constitute 30% of your final grade for the course.

Writing assignment: The primary written assignment for the course is a final paper, focused on the work of some contemporary political association or thinker-activist and making explicit connections to the material we read and discuss in class. Here are some *suggestions*:

Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians - <http://www.aacmchicago.org/>

Boggs, Grace Lee. *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*. (University of California, 2012).

Coalition of Immokalee Workers - <https://ciw-online.org/>

Cooperation Jackson - <https://cooperationjackson.org/>

Highlander Research & Education Center - <https://www.highlandercenter.org/>

Occupy the SEC - <https://www.occupythesec.org/>

Movement for Black Lives - <https://policy.m4bl.org/>

Sharp, Gene. *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Framework for Liberation*. (The New Press, 2012).

Solnit, Rebecca. *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. (Haymarket Books, 2016).

There is no specific length (number of pages) for this paper. But since that inevitably makes students nervous, think in the area of 15-20 double spaced pages (in 12-point font with one-inch margins). To prepare for this paper you **MUST** speak with me at least twice one-on-one during office hours. You must discuss possible topics for your paper no later than the end of week eight (October 16th). Soon thereafter I will want a progress report: you must meet with me again to discuss difficulties, ideas, questions no later November 25th (Thanksgiving week).

PLEASE NOTE: *If you fail to speak with me about your paper by these dates you will lose one third of a letter grade off the actual grade you make for the paper itself. (For example, if I would grade your paper as a B+ you will make only a B, etc.). This sanction applies to each meeting.*

What I am looking for in this assignment is for you to make connections between the topics we cover in readings & class discussions (e.g., power or leadership or education) and the goals, activities and arguments that these associations and thinkers advance. The connections can be either positive (meaning the thinker or association exemplifies something in the readings) or contrastive (meaning the thinker or association seems to provide a counterexample). Your grade will reflect the quality of reasoning and evidence you bring to bear in presenting and defending your argument. Your grade on the final paper will constitute 70% of your course grade.

Course & Instructor Policies – The Fine Print

Policy on Attendance: Given the nature of the class *attendance is not optional*. If you need to miss class for some reason, please let me know.

Policy on Electronic Devices: My policy on electronic devices in class (meaning any screen connected to silicon chips) is restrictive. No cell phones at all! Turn them off and put them away when you get to class. Laptops or tablets are allowed solely for access assigned readings or notes. In general, you should disconnect from the internet. In fact, *if you have readings or notes you will need in class, you are better off getting them off of your devices and onto paper*. If I detect you engaged in social media during class I will ask you to shut off your device and put it away. If this happens a second (or subsequent) time I will ask you to leave class. This will obviously impact your ability to participate in discussions and thereby your final grade.

Policy on classroom interactions: In order to create a classroom environment that supports respectful, critical inquiry through the open exchange of ideas, we will observe the following guidelines: (i) Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their views; (ii) Recognize that reasonable persons can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions; (iii) Because constructive disagreement sharpens thinking, deepens understanding, and reveals novel insights, I do not just expect disagreement but encourage it; (iv) Welcome and listen to all viewpoints with the caveat that none is immune from scrutiny and debate; (v) Your grade - to repeat - will be based on the quality of reasoning and evidence you bring to bear in presenting and defending your views whatever they happen to be. *There is no party line in the class*. So, whether or not you agree with the instructor has no bearing on your grade.

Statement on Academic Honesty: I operate on the assumption that every student in the course is familiar with and abides by the College policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not familiar with those policies, please go to the Board on Academic Honesty web page and make yourself familiar. You can find that page here: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>.

I will provide specific instructions for each course assignment. In any event, I take a very dim view of cheating and plagiarism of any sort. It makes me very cranky. So, I will refer any and all suspected instances to the Board on Academic Honesty. The easiest way to avoid such unpleasantness is to not succumb to temptations to cheat, plagiarize, bend the rules, exploit loopholes, and so forth. As a default, if you are unsure in any way about whether something is “allowed” ask me.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability of any sort that you believe will impact your ability to meet the expectations laid out in this syllabus I encourage you to speak with me in person as early in the term as is possible. If you are not comfortable speaking to me directly, you should contact the Office of Disability Services who can assist you in making your needs clear to myself and your other teachers. In any case, we can make reasonable accommodation regarding the assignments. You can find them here: (<https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/index.html>).

Policy on late assignments: Except in the direst circumstances I very much frown upon late assignments. I will deduct one third of a letter grade for every day an assignment is late. (This means if your grade would have been a B+, one day late gets you a deduction to B, two days a deduction to B-, etc.). If you anticipate a problem getting an assignment in on time (due to, say, religious holidays, travel for athletic teams, etc.) please speak to me *in advance*. I will make reasonable accommodation to address such difficulties.

Course Schedule: What follows is a schedule of readings ...

August

28 - Introduction

28 - Payne; Cobb (x2)

30 - Dewey (1938)

September

2 - *Labor Day – No Class*

4 - Ransby chapters 3-6

9 - Ransby chapters 7-12

11- Dewey (1927)

16 – Dewey (1927)

18 - Pierce (x2); Dewey

23 - Isaac; Glaude; Dawson (x2)

25 - Unger, page 1-64, 98-189

30 – Ansell Knight & Johnson;

October

1 - Livingston; Rogers

7 - Moses & Cobb, pages 1-90;

8 - Moses & Cobb, pages 91-221; Quine

14 - *Fall Break – No Class*

16 - Hacker; Isaac

21 – Catch Up

23 - Horton & Friere; Clark; Thompson

November

4 - Catch Up

6 - Tampio; Bruch & Soss

11 - Gillen

13- Payne; Tucker-Raymond; Smith

18 - Orszag; Epstein

20 - Tufte; Johnson

25 - Tufte; Johnson

27 - *Thanksgiving Break – No Class*

December

2 - Anderson (x2)

4 - Kitcher; Schulson & Bagg

9 - Catch Up

11- Catch Up

16 - Final paper due (5:00 pm)