



Democracy Past and Present

University of Rochester

Spring 2018, TR 2:00-3:15

RRL 202: Room D

Course Description

This course is meant to expose students, in the intimate environment of the seminar (characterized by a close-knit group of people who meet to discuss a particular topic in-depth), to the concept of democracy, particularly Athenian democracy, but with careful consideration of the concept and ideals of democracy. Democracy is one of those terms that is easy to define but hard to say what that would look like in the real world. We will begin by examining the various parts of the Athenian democracy as it stood in full flourishing of the democracy in the 4th century. BC. We will then turn to look historically at how this system evolved. Finally, we will examine various problems with democracy, both in the ancient world and in the modern world.

The general format of the course will consist of short lectures, readings from both ancient and modern writers, discussions of the readings and democracy, short writing assignments, a book review, oral presentations, and a final project analyzing an ancient inscription. There will be a final exam during exam period. Prerequisites: none.



Instructor

Nicholas Gresens
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Office Hours

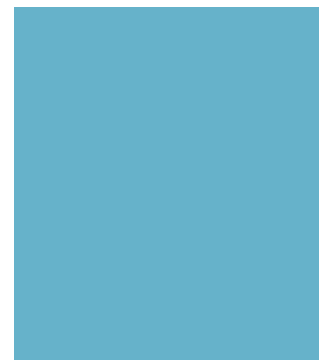
RRL 435
Mon/Wed 1-2
or by appt.

Required Texts

Aristotle and Xenophon on Democracy and Oligarchy

Aristotle's Politics

Democracy in Classical Athens, by Christopher Carey



Learning Outcomes

- describe the various parts of Athenian Democracy and how they functioned together
- outline the major historical events and actors that brought about and changed Athenian democracy
- critically read ancient sources for our knowledge of Athenian democracy
- contemplate modern democracies via comparison with ancient Athens and via contemplation of the values that democracy anywhere requires
- Improve academic writing

Course Instruction

As a seminar, this course depends in large part upon your participation. You will get out of it what you put in. There will be regular readings, short writing assignments about the readings, and discussion. In addition, I will regularly lecture to provide extra information. In the second half of the

semester, you will get opportunities to “be the teacher” presenting chapters of a book and summarizing a book you have read and written a review of. Finally, you will research an ancient inscription and write a term paper discussing it, focusing particularly on what it tells us

about the functioning of ancient Athenian democracy.

Find a place you can read, think, and write that you can call your own.

Course Requirements

Daily Reading Assignments: These will be posted on blackboard—they will consist of ancient sources and modern scholarship. Please bring them to class (not your computer)

Short writing assignments: For six of the ancient sources, there will be a writing prompt. You must submit four for a grade.

Book Review: Read and review (~5 pages) a modern work on democracy. You will present your book in class at the end of the semester.

Research Paper: Discuss an ancient inscription, particularly in light of what it tells us about the functioning of ancient democracy. (10-15

pages)

Chapter Presentation: We will be collectively reading the book *A Different Democracy*. In small groups, you will be assigned a different chapter to present to the class.

Exam: Take home final

Grading

Your grade will be broken down into the following components:

Short writing: 25% (total)
Book Review: 20%
Book Presentation: 10%
A Different Democracy Presentation: 15%
Research Paper: 20%
Final Exam: 10%

How the Grades are calculated

Generally, we will discuss the criteria that will be used to evaluate each of the different assignments. I will also provide a loose rubric that I use to determine grades. With that said, there are a few things I do generally look for:

- Editing, proof-reading, and general professionalism
- Organization of your idea (and make sure you have a clearly articulated idea)
- Quality of your argument—if you make a statement, support it either with outside support (quality sources are better than questionable ones) or fully explain your logic (proper citation is expected)
- Depth of discussion: complex, original, and interesting ideas that integrate material from this course or others that you have taken are better than simple regurgitation.
- Note that I do not take into major consideration your “style.”
- An A Paper is clearly and concisely written, with original thought, fully supported with both outside sources and reasoned argument
- A B Paper is clearly written with original thought, most ideas are supported with outside sources or reasoned argument
- A C Paper contains some original thought, but mostly reiterates what someone else has said, and fails to support many of the ideas presented.

Course Schedule

This is a sketch outline of the semester, including topics and activities. Specific readings will be found on Blackboard. It is possible, particularly at the end of the semester, that topics will change, depending on your interests and the direction the course takes.

Wk 1—Introduction to the course

Wk 2—History and Geography of Greece; review discussion
Terms and Ideas

Wk 3—How Athens Functioned—Citizenship
How Athens Functioned—Ecclesia and Boule

Wk 4—How Athens Functioned—Administration
How Athens Functioned—Courts

Wk 5—How Athens Functioned—Some curiosities about the system
History of Athenian Democracy—an introduction to our sources

Wk 6—History of Athenian Democracy—the Mythological Past
History of Athenian Democracy—Solon’s Reforms

Wk 7—History of Athenian Democracy—Tyranny and the 6th century
History of Athenian Democracy—Cleisthenes’ Reforms

Wk 8—History of Athenian Democracy—Reforms of the early 5th century
Book Review Peer discussion

Spring Break

Wk 9—History of Athenian Democracy—Speed bumps of the late 5th century; **Book Review Due**
History of Athenian Democracy—Historical Wrap-up; A Different Democracy Intro.

Wk 10—Problems with Democracy—Freedom; A Different Democracy Discussion
Problems with Democracy—Justice; A Different Democracy Discussion

Wk 11—Problems with Democracy—Voting; A Different Democracy Discussion
Problems with Democracy—Majority Rule; A Different Democracy Discussion

Wk 12—Problems with Democracy—Representation; A Different Democracy Discussion
Problems with Democracy—Equality; A Different Democracy Discussion

Wk 13—Problems with Democracy—Deliberation; A Different Democracy Discussion
Problems with Democracy—The Rule of Law; A Different Democracy Discussion

Wk 14—Book Review Share; Different Democracy Conclusion
Book Review Share

Wk 15—Closing Comments—The Future of Democracy; **Final Papers Due**

Take Home Final Due either in person or via email by Friday, May 10 at 4 PM.

Attendance/Late Work Policy

Attendance is required. As a seminar, your input is necessary, and although I do plot out where I think the discussion will go, few class sessions ever goes as planned. For this reason, if you do have to miss class, you are responsible for finding out what was discussed and covered. You are also expected to submit homework on time for full credit. Excessive absence (more than three missed classes) will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please talk to me. I know that you are taking other classes and have lives outside of this course, but I also know that developing good study habits/time-management skills is part of what you are learning here, so I am doing my best to encourage that, too.

If you must miss a class due to a school sanctioned activity, such as religious observance, academic conference, or sporting event, you must make arrangements for this before the class.

Academic Honesty Policy

You will be held to the highest standards of academic integrity in this course. The university cannot function fully without maintaining this standard. I assume that all work submitted for this class will be your own, honestly completed, and that you will not do anything to prevent your classmates from doing their best work. Anything less, including, but not limited to, plagiarism and fabrication of information, copying someone else's work, or learning what is on an exam prior to the exam period (except what I provide) will be considered a violation of the University Academic Honesty Policy and will be dealt with quickly and appropriately. If you are unfamiliar with the policy, which has recently been updated, you can read it here: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>

A word on collaboration: In the words of the Board on Academic Honesty Website, "You are encouraged to discuss course readings and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another. In order to make appropriate help available for your essays, I encourage you to consult with me and with the College Writing, Speaking and Argument Program. The term research paper will require citations and 'Works Cited.'" The exact format of these citations and works cited page is up to you. It must, however, be consistent throughout. If you have questions, please consult with me.

For any handouts or Powerpoint slides you present (for the oral presentations), you must cite the sources of your information appropriately. If you are doing a group assignment (the A Different Democracy presentation, e.g.), a breach of academic honesty by one member of the team will be considered a breach by all.

Disability Resources

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

<https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/faculty/syllabus-statements.html>

Use of Technology in Class

Don't use extraneous technology in class. It is distracting and contrary to why you are in class. Studies have shown that use of technology for the purposes of note-taking or reading the text is actually less effective than more traditional methods. When we are discussing a text, you must have that text in front of you so you can annotate, underline, and otherwise engage with the text. If you are waiting for some really important text or phone call, let me know, otherwise, it can wait. And technology is strictly forbidden during quizzes and exams. If you need to use your laptop for some reason, please consult with me.

Course Credit Policy

This course follows the College credit our policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 3 hours per week. The external reading of your book for your book review and the time you spend researching your final paper makes up the fourth hour. Note that this does not include time needed to complete other regular course assignments or studying. Most courses assume about 2 hours per credit hour per week of supplementary work.

It has always been my belief that learning takes place on one's own, in the quiet of their mind. While instruction and reinforcement may take place in the classroom, thinking and learning takes place while studying.