This year the seminar will focus on broad matters in the theory of democracy. It has three aims:

(a) to help make you modestly literate regarding some important topics in contemporary political theory as well how these derive from writings published prior to say, 1980;

(b) to get you to think about the foundations of our discipline, in particular the putative dichotomy between facts and values that most political scientists take for granted;

(c) to familiarize you with a range of strategies for justifying or criticizing political arrangements or policies.

You have three primary tasks. First, you must actively engage in discussion in class. I want to make it clear that I expect active classroom participation - no reminders, no warnings, no cajoling. That means you need to have something to say – it should be smart and on point. That means you need to read and think in between class meetings. While that may sound patronizing, past experience suggests that I need to say such things bluntly. Participation will count for 10% of your grade.

Second, over the course of the term each student must submit 5 short papers that address in a critical way some aspect of or problem with the assigned reading. These papers are due in class on the day that the relevant reading has been assigned and I will not accept them at any other time. They may be no more than three typed pages long. Your performance on these papers will account for 30% of your grade for the course. You can write on any topic you like (or that interfere least with your other commitments) but to insure that you do not wait until the final weeks of the term I expect each of you to submit at least two of these assignments prior to week eight.

Finally, you must write three take-home assignments. The latter will be distributed and due on the dates indicated on the schedule below. I will pose a question or questions or propose a topic and you will respond, drawing on assigned readings. (Consider this part of “the violence inherent in the system!”- see page 2 for the reference.) There will be a strict page limit – in the vicinity of 8-10 typed pages. I will not accept late papers absent the most dire extenuating circumstances. Each of the papers will be worth 20% of your grade.

**Background**

Many of you have little or no background in political theory. (I venture to guess that you think you have little or no interest in or need for acquaintance with the field either!)
Should you feel the need to consult a basic survey of the subject, here are some reliable candidates:

- Jonathan Wolff. 2006. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Oxford UP.

I list these in no particular order. Be warned – nearly all of the authors draw a sharper distinction between “normative” political theory and “positive” social science than I think is sustainable. And each has a point to make; they are not just reporting what this or that theorist or position means.

**Required Readings**

A dozen books - marked * - are required. I have not ordered them for this course at the bookstore. However, Rousseau, Marx, Mill, Dewey, Arendt, Foucault, and Riker all are on order there for my undergraduate course (PSC 104). You should be able to obtain all the required books in paperback - and probably used – from your favorite e-purveyor. I recommend the editions I indicate here because the titles are deceiving – several of these are collections and I will ask you to read specific works.

**Other Readings:** In *Monty Python & the Holy Grail* there is a famous scene where King Arthur engages in heated debate over the notion of sovereignty with a handful of very contentious, muddy peasants. The peasants announce that they belong to an “autonomous collective,” a “self-governing anarcho-syndicalist commune” and so have little regard for the pretenses of centralized monarchical authority. I find their arguments persuasive. (See: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bqQ-C1PSE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bqQ-C1PSE&feature=related) if you are unfamiliar with this canonical argument.) So this course will operate in much the same way as that scene. You can think of me as King Arthur and think of yourselves as the contentious peasants. That means you will need to act as a self-governing collective. Each week you students will “take it in turns” (by some method of your own devising) to insure the availability for the following week of any of the relevant reading materials not available via e-journals from the library. This will require that the chosen ones ascertain which readings are not easily available on the web, obtain those readings from me, copy them if necessary (at my expense), and make sure that they are placed on electronic reserve at Rush Rhees Library – or are otherwise made available to the entire class. I have nearly all the papers assigned here in pdf format.
Class Schedule

Week One (August 30)

Introduction.

Week Two (September 6)


Week Three (September 13)


Week Four (September 20) ~ First Writing Assignment Distributed


**Week Five (September 27) ~ First Writing Assignment Due**


**Week Six (October 4)**


Benjamin Constant. “The Liberty of the Ancients as Compared to that of the Moderns.” In Political Writings. Cambridge UP.

**Week Seven** (October 11)


**Week Eight** (October 18)


**Week Nine** (October 25)


  James Scott. 2010. “The Trouble with the View from Above”

**Week Ten** (November 1) ~ *Second Writing Assignment Distributed*


**Week Eleven** (November 8) ~ *Second Writing Assignment Due.*


**Week Twelve (November 15)**


**Week Thirteen (November 22) ~ No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Week Fourteen (November 29)**

* John Rawls. 2001 *Justice as Fairness*. Harvard UP.


**Week Fifteen (December 6) ~ Final Assignment Distributed**


**Finals Week (December 19) ~ Final Assignment Due**