

Political Science 284: Democratic Theory
Fall 2020 ~ M&W 9:00-10:15
Instructor: James Johnson
Office Hours: T 10-11:30 & By Appointment
Harkness 312 ~ jd.johnson@rochester.edu

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 if '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.

Class Format: This is a strange time. It is an anxiety producing time. And a frustrating time. My aim in the class is to support you as you try to navigate the strangeness, anxiety and frustration so you can learn and move toward your degree. If *at any time* you need to rant or vent or just talk about the strangeness, anxiety and frustration, or *anything else*, we can arrange to do that. Reach out.

We will hold all group meetings remotely – via your favorite platform, Zoom. Why? Given my age I am in an especially susceptible population covid-wise. I hope to have these meetings be more discussion based than simple lectures. We can talk about how to manage that via Zoom at our first meeting. And I return to this matter below in the section on “grading.” Here please note this:

On-Line Etiquette: Several things I will insist on. (1) Mute your mic except when speaking. (2) Cameras on! – No Avatars or blacked out screens, please. (3) Use the chat function to raise questions or get in the queue to speak. (4) Feel free to interrupt me if you need clarification or whatever.

I also will ask you to meet me one-on-one four times during the first part of the term (prior to Thanksgiving when everything goes totally on line). If you are on campus we will meet in my office, which can accommodate the requisite social distancing. If you are off campus, we can meet via Zoom. We will schedule these meetings in advance so as to accommodate your schedule. The tutorials will happen roughly every two weeks.

These meetings will serve as “tutorials”: I will give a broad topic/assignment, you will write a very short paper (3 pages maximum) on that topic. The paper will be due the day before we meet. And when we meet you and I will talk about what you’ve written. Each meeting will last about 20 minutes. I understand that for some of you this will seem like a daunting prospect. I am *not* trying to terrorize you! Instead it is an opportunity for me to make contact and check in with you about how you are doing in the course and otherwise. I hope you will think of these meetings more like a conversation than as an interrogation.

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 NOT ordered books (marked *) at the University Bookstore because I could not tell whether any of you would actually be on campus. All also are readily available from your preferred e-purveyor. I will make the other readings available via a course Blackboard page. A number of the assigned readings are, as is clear from the syllabus, available directly on line – I have indicated where this is the case.

I

* Barbara Ransby. 2003. *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. UNC Press. [Available via Rush Rhees Library on-line]

II

*John Dewey. 1927. *The Public & Its Problems*. Swallow Press. [Available via Rush Rhees Library on-line]

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.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. 2020. "Of Course There Are Protests. The State Is Failing Black People," *New York Times* (30 May). https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/opinion/george-floyd-minneapolis.html?action=click&block=associated_collection_recirc&impression_id=5f273dc0-e590-11ea-9332-b73753eeb698&index=0&pgtype=Article®ion=footer

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. 2020. "The End of Black Politics," *New York Times* (13 June). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/13/opinion/sunday/black-politicians-george-floyd-protests.html>

IV

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

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

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

* Robert Moses & Charles Cobb. 2002. *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project*. Beacon Press. [Available via Rush Rhees Library on-line]

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 Clark. 1964. "Literacy & Liberation," *Freedomways* (Winter) 4:115-24.

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.

VIII

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

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.

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.

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 20% of your final grade for the course.

Tutorials: Your written and in-person performance for tutorials will constitute 40% 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.

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 start of week nine (October 19th). Soon thereafter I will want a progress report: you must meet with me again to discuss difficulties, ideas, questions no later November 23rd (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 40% of your course grade.

So, to summarize, for purposes of final grades:

Class Participation:	20%
Tutorials:	40%
Written assignment:	40%
<hr/>	
TOTAL:	100%

Course & Instructor Policies – The Fine Print (Spelled out at length because the University Legal Counsel insists on this sort of legalistic stuff) ...

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. *We will make accommodation for students in time zones widely different from local Rochester time.*

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 social media and phone/text communication media. 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 with it. 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. Very! I will refer any and all suspected instances of cheating or plagiarism 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” just 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

26 - Introduction

31- Ransby chapters 3-6

September

2 - Ransby chapters 7-12

7 - *Labor Day – No Class*

9- Dewey (1927)

14 – Dewey (1927)

16 - Pierce (x2); Dewey (1939)

21 - Isaac; Taylor (x2)

23 – Glaude; Dawson (x2)

28 – Unger, page 1-64, 98-189

30 - Unger, page 98-189

October

5 - Knight & Johnson;

7 - Livingston; Rogers

12 – Catch Up

14 - Quine; Moses & Cobb, pages 1-90

19 - Moses & Cobb, pages 91-221

21 - Hacker; Isaac

26 - Horton & Friere

28 - Clark; Thompson

November

2- Payne; Cobb (x2)

4 - Dewey (1938)

9 - Tampio; Bruch & Soss

11- Gillen

16 – Payne; Tucker-Raymond

18 – Orszag; Epstein

23 – Catch Up

25 - *Thanksgiving Break – No Class*

30 - Anderson (x2); Kitcher

December

2 - Tufte; Johnson

7 - Final Paper Discussions

9- Final Paper Discussions

16 - Final paper due (5:00 pm)