

Political Science 284: Democratic Theory

Spring 2023 Δ Le Chase Hall 148 Δ M&W 10:25-11:40

Instructor: James Johnson

Office Hours: T 10:30-12:30 & By Appointment

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Public Health Prologue Many folks – including the University administration – seem to think Covid is “over.” That, I believe, is naïve and dangerous. Not only is the direct experience of contracting Covid dangerous, but we know little about the long-term and downstream implications. What we do know about such things tends to be disturbing. However, College and University policies insist that we engage in risky behavior. And I (Professor Johnson) am part of an age cohort for whom Covid is especially dangerous. So please, if you feel even the faintest bit poorly stay away from class. Feel free to mask and maintain as much social distancing as our classroom allows. I encourage you to do all three.

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The course this year something of an experiment. We 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, race, 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

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. I also respect you students enough to not dumb the material down to the lowest common denominator. 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. Several are available on-line at Rush Rhees Library (marked ^E). All also are readily available from your preferred e-purveyor. I will make the other readings available via a course Blackboard page. Several of the assigned readings are, as is clear from the syllabus, available directly on-line – I have indicated where this is the case.

I - Honoring Dr. King

Martin Luther King, Jr. Four Essays – 1967-68. [“Nonviolence & Social Change”; “Where Do We Go from Here?”; “Black Power”: “A Time to Break Silence.”] All in *The Radical King*. Edited by Cornell West. Beacon Press 2015.

II - An Alternative Hero

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

III – Pragmatist Tradition

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

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

Randall Calvert. 1992. “Leadership & Its Basis in Problems of Social Coordination,” *International Political Science Review* 13:7-24.

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.

IV - ... And Contemporary Politics

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>

V – Pragmatists: Power & Institutions

* Roberto Mangabeira Unger. 2009. *The Left Alternative*. Verso. <http://www.robertounger.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/the-left-alternative.pdf> [Pages 1-48; 52-63; 98-132; 164-170].

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.

VI – Algebra Project

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

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.

VII – Citizenship & Freedom Schools

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.

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.

VIII – Democratizing Education (i)

* 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.

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.

IX – Democratizing Education (II)

* Jay Gillen. 2019. *The Power in the Room*. Beacon Press.

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

Nathan DiCamillo. 2018. "The Little Bank that Could," *New York Times* (April 13). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/13/business/the-little-bank-that-could.html>

X – Democracy and Expertise

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.

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 mid-term and a final.

Final grades for the course will reflect three things:

Musical Contributions: According to political theorist Roberto Unger, the exploration of political possibilities "is not about blueprints, it is about pathways. It is not architecture, it is music." To honor this suggestion, I ask that you share music with your classmates. I expect each of you to make two contributions to the "Music" folder on the course Blackboard page. In addition to providing a link/audio file, I expect you to offer 2-3 sentences about what strikes you about your offering and what you hope

your classmates will “get” from listening. Your contribution to this enterprise is worth 10% of your final grade.

On some days I will ask a student from the class to comment on one or more of the offerings in the Music folder. In other words, you’ll need to not just deposit tunes, but actually listen to what your classmates deposit as well.

You must make these contributions no later than week 12 of the course.

Class participation: The course is relatively small and will run - as much as is possible – as a discussion. 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 ensure 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.

Please note! As I already have said once, 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.

Having said all that, I urge you to read and think about the “Policy on Classroom Interactions” below. Every student in the class is due civility and respect irrespective of their substantive views. What matters are evidence, reasoning and the clarity with which they are articulated.

Written Assignments: There will be a take home mid-term and a take home final. These will cover materials from the lectures and readings. You can expect to write ten to twelve pages (with e.g., double spacing, 12-point font, etc) for each assignment. I will provide prompts for each exam. Yes, each assignment will include multiple questions/prompts. That means you should anticipate having to have done pretty much all of the reading and to have attended lectures. I will also provide detailed instructions. Please see the comments regarding Academic Honesty below. You will have roughly a week to complete each assignment. Dates appear on the schedule that follow. Please plan accordingly. Please see the comments regarding late assignments below.

Each written assignment will constitute 35% of your grade for the course. There is no ‘curve.’ In cases at the margin your regular smart participation in class discussions will get you the benefit of the doubt. So, to summarize, for purposes of final grades:

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|-----------------------|------|
| Musical Contributions | 10% |
| Class Participation: | 20% |
| Mid-term | 35% |
| Final | 35% |
| <hr/> | |
| TOTAL: | 100% |

Course & Instructor Policies – The Fine Print (Spelled out at ludicrous 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.

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 – including the instructor’s – 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>).

Religious Observances: If you need to miss class for religious observances, please just let me know.

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. In particular, I will gladly accommodate faith-based exceptions to any expectations or assignments laid out above.

Office Hours: I will have regular office hours. These will be announced by the end of the first week of class.

Class Schedule

January

11 Introduction

16 MLK Readings

18 Ransby

23 Ransby

25 Dewey

30 Dewey

February

1 Calvert; Payne

6 Peirce (x2); Dewey

8 Isaac; Glaude

13 Dawson (x2)

15 Taylor (x2)

20 Unger

22 Unger **Mid-Term-Distributed**

27 Johnson/Knight; Livingston

March

1 Rogers **Mid-Term Due**

6 Spring Break

8 Spring Break

13 Moses & Cobb

15 Moses & Cobb; Quine

20 Hacker; Isaac

22 Horton/Friere; Clark

27 Cobb (x2)

29 Dewey

April

3 Tampio; Bruch/Soss

5 Payne; Tucker Raymond

10 Thompson; DiCamillo

12 Gillen

17 Gillen

19 Orszag; Kitcher

24 Anderson (x2) **Final Exam Distributed**

26 Epstein; Johnson

May

1 **Final Exam Due**