



Lakehead University
POLI 4911 FA (2021)
Democracy and the History of Political Thought
Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:30

Professor: Dr. Patrick Cain (Political Science)

Contact Information: Given the current Covid restrictions, most course related questions are best asked before, during, or after class meeting times. If this is not practical, send an email and an appointment can be set up if necessary. The professor attempts to respond quickly to emails, so if you do not receive a reply within 3 business days, please follow up with an additional email. (Note: emails requesting information found on this course outline will not be replied to).

Required Texts:

1. Cain, Sims, Block, *Democracy and the History of Political Thought* (DHPT), Lexington, 2021
2. All other required readings are linked to below or will be posted on the course website

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

This course is a seminar. Its primary aim is not to cover specific information or to provide students with pre-arranged sets of learned material. Rather, this course is meant to develop and enhance students' ability to: (a) freely partake in the art of thoughtful and reasoned discussion about the most important human questions; (b) produce reasoned and well organized writings about the most important human questions; (c) read and consider important and complex texts with care and insight, attempting to understand them as they were understood by the authors themselves, while reflecting on how their insights might illuminate and guide our own lives. To achieve these aims, this course focuses on important theories and debates in political philosophy, exploring the defining characteristics of democracy, and its relationship to other forms of government, especially tyranny and oligarchy.

Of special concern to us will be the arguments for and against democracy made on the

basis of justice, freedom, equality, virtue, and expertise. Oligarchic and tyrannic rulers claim that their superiority in virtue or talents or knowledge gives them a natural and just right to rule over others, and they tend to see no limit to the degree to which they can exercise power over the ruled. Democrats, on the other hand, argue that human freedom and equality are essential characteristics of the human being, and so should be protected and advanced by the political community, and that all (and especially the majority?) should share in debate and power. But since the democratic political community must be ruled, so how can democracy allow for the distinctions that make political rule possible? What democratic principle allows one human being to justly rule over another, even to a limited extent?

Guiding our exploration of these and related questions will be some of the most influential and important arguments made in the history of political thought by preeminent political philosophers. Our examination of their writings will lead us to consider the strengths and weakness of democracy, including both its tendency to devolve into tyranny, and its record of providing a freedom and equality conducive to certain kinds of human flourishing. In sum, the readings involve the most important debates about the best form of government, and whether, or to what extent, democracy is it.

Teaching and Learning with COVID-19

In response to the new (and likely changing) government and university health guidelines, the professor will use various teaching methods in attempt to find the best pedagogical approach under the circumstances. Thus, throughout the semester, students should expect adjustments to how class time is organized and utilized.

Grading and Assignment Details:

Reading Assignments 7 X 3% = 21%

Paper One: 20%

Paper Two: 20%

Take-Home Exam: 20%

Participation: 19%

In Class Assignments

There will be ten in-class assignments (some of which will take the form of quizzes). These assignments will not be announced in advance, and will often be given at the beginning of class. Each assignment will be based on the assigned readings for the day and are especially designed to encourage, develop and measure students' careful completion of the assigned readings, and their preparation for class time, including the degree to which students engaged and comprehended the assigned reading in preparation for in-class discussion. Therefore, these assignments cannot be made up. However, to allow some leeway for unavoidable (including excused) absence or tardiness, the three lowest reading assignment scores will be dropped, with students' top seven scores counting toward their final grade.

Papers

For each paper, students are required to formulate an essay in response to a prompt that will be related to a portion of a class day's readings. Students will submit an electronic copy (through

the course website) of their papers by the beginning of class time on the prescribed date. Late papers will incur a penalty of 2% per day late. Details and topics to be distributed.

Participation

For class meetings all students are expected to:

1. Attend having read assigned material carefully
2. Be prepared to discuss the readings
3. Bring the hard copies of the readings to class
4. Discuss the readings with fellow students during class time
5. Stay focused on the class discussion; use of electronic devices is prohibited
6. Avoid: (a) excessive absences and tardies; (b) private conversations; (c) being inattentive and/or appearing inattentive.

In addition to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the assigned readings, to achieve a high participation mark, students should participate with regularity, integrating the readings into the discussion in a way that (a) primarily responds to the readings (b) in a way that recognizes the contribution of others to the discussion; and (c) that moves forward our consideration of the reading and the issues at hand. Students are free to voice and defend controversial opinions about the intellectual questions at stake, either because they think them true, or for the sake of exploring the strength or weakness of conventional opinion (e.g. playing "devil's advocate").

Class Readings: This course readings involve complex ideas and arguments. Moreover, the presentation of these ideas and arguments sometimes takes forms that may be unfamiliar to students. To grasp their content and prepare for reading quizzes and discussion students should read the assigned texts carefully, slowly, and at least several times before class time. Papers and the exam will also require students to focus on class texts.

Other Policies:

Recording of Classes is Prohibited

To protect the security and freedom of all members of the class, and the intellectual property of the instructor, no audio or video recording of the class is allowed without the written permission of the instructor, which likely will not be given. If recording is permitted, it will be strictly for private use and cannot be shared with others without the written permission of the instructor.

Communication

The instructor will regularly communicate with students about a variety of matters, both through in-class announcements and via email (using students' Lakehead email account).

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

Plagiarism involves presenting another's work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is NOT paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material including paraphrased material.
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters.

Accessibility and Accommodation

Students with accessibility issues or with requested accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

Covid 19 Related Absences

Students are expected to follow all Covid-19 protocols. If following the protocols requires a student to miss class, and the professor is emailed with this reason for absence within a reasonable timeframe (i.e. approximately 24 hrs before or after the missed class), the professor will do his best to allow missed work to be made up. If the illness is so serious that an email cannot be sent within this timeframe, or if a student does not wish to disclose health information to the professor (perfectly understandable!), applications for accommodation may be made through Student Accessibility Services at the time that health permits.

READING SCHEDULE

The Reading Schedule will be adjusted throughout the year in response to the fruitfulness of class discussion, and how quickly we are proceeding through the material. Some readings may be added or removed in response to class discussion.

9/7 Course Outline and Introduction

Part One—The Democratic Spirit and Education

- 9/9 *Democracy and the History of Political Thought* (DHPT), Introduction (only pages 1-5)
Frederick Douglass, *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?* (1852)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>
- 9/14 Douglass, *Lincoln's Funeral Oration* (1872)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/oration-in-memory-of-abraham-lincoln/>

- 9/16 Douglass, *Blessings of Liberty and Education* (1894) <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/blessings-of-liberty-and-education/>
 DuBois, *Of the Training of Black Men* (1903)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/of-the-training-of-black-men/>
 Recommended: Sutton, DHPT, Chapter 23
- 9/21 Strauss, *What is Liberal Education?*
<https://www.nas.org/academic-questions/17/1/what-is-liberal-education/pdf>
 DuBois, *The Talented Tenth* (1903)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-talented-tenth/>
 Maryanne Wolfe, Skim Reading
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/25/skim-reading-new-normal-maryanne-wolf>
- 9/23 Strauss, *What is Liberal Education?*
- 9/28 Strauss, *Liberal Education and Responsibility*
- 9/30 Strauss, *Liberal Education and Responsibility*
 Recommended: Forde, DHPT, Chapter 4
- 10/5 Burns, DHPT, Chapter 25
 Recommended: Blitz, DHPT, Chapter 24
- 10/7 TBA
Paper One Due
- 10/12 STUDY WEEK
- 10/14 STUDY WEEK
- Part Two—Ancient Democracy and the Soul**
- 10/19 Aristotle, *Politics Book III*
- 10/21 Block, DHPT, Chapter 6
 Recommended: Cain, DHPT, Chapter 9
- 10/22 Political Science Speaker Series:
 Dr. Stephen Block, *Aristotle and the Spirit of Democracy*
 2:30-3:30 via Zoom
 1 point bonus on next Reading Assignment for attendance
- 10/26 Aristotle, *Politics Book III*
- 11/2 Nichols, DHPT, Chapter 5, 69-79
 Plato, *Tripartite Soul*
<https://brianneradke.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/platos-tripartite-soul/>
- 10/28 Plato, *Republic*, Divided Line

<https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60765.pdf>

Plato, *Republic*, Allegory of the Cave

<https://web.stanford.edu/class/ihum40/cave.pdf>

Nichols, DHPT, Chapter 5, 79-84

11/4 Plato, *Republic*, Book 8, 221-236

11/9 Plato, *Republic*, Book 8, 237-242

11/11 Plato, *Republic*, Book 8, 242-249

Nichols, DHPT, Chapter 5, 84-87

Part Three—Modern Democracy and the Soul

11/16 Tocqueville, Tyranny of the Majority

Paper Two Due

11/18 Tocqueville, Tyranny of the Majority

11/23 Tocqueville, Individualism, Materialism and Religion

11/25 Tocqueville, Individualism, Materialism and Religion

11/30 Tocqueville, Democracy, Aristocracy and Despotism

Lawler, DHPT, Chapter 22

12/2 Tocqueville, Democracy, Aristocracy and Despotism

12/7 Catch up and Review

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM