

**Topics in Political Thought I:
Democratic Theory**
POL 484H (F)
Fall 2006, University of Toronto

Time: M 10-12

Location: 2120 Sidney Smith Hall.

Contact information:

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Course Description

An experiment in a new form of governance is taking place this year in Ontario. A Citizens' Assembly of randomly selected citizens is asked by the government of Ontario to examine the current electoral system and to offer possible reforms to be presented to the entire province in a referendum. The seminar will take the Citizens' Assembly as a focal point to the study of the historical origins of democratic theory and of key issues in contemporary democratic theory.

Students will ask to post their assignments to a seminar blog which will be open to reading and commentary by the general public. In the assignments, students will discuss the relevance of the readings and of class discussions to the Citizens' Assembly and report their field observations of meetings of the Assembly. The intention is to make the blog an important voice in public discussions on the assembly and in this way to allow the students not only to learn democratic theory in an abstract way but also to practice democratic deliberation and civic engagement.

Grading:

Attendance and participation: 10%

Seminar presentation + class paper: 20%

Two comments on class papers: 5% (2.5% each)

Two Citizens Assembly observation reports: 30% (15% each)

Two comments on observation reports: 5% (2.5% each)

Final Paper: 30%

Policies:

- a. The criteria for evaluating the essays are detailed in the relevant sections in the syllabus. The assignment must be posted online by the due date. Late work will be penalized one grade notch (e.g., B- to C+) for each day it is late. The weekend counts as one day. If, for some reason, you cannot submit the assignment on time you must get prior written approval by the instructor. Permission for late submission should be requested as soon as possible and at least 48 hours prior to the due date except in documented cases of emergency.
- b. Please plan your schedule for the semester carefully, as you have a lot of flexibility regarding when to submit your assignments. Use the Personal Assignment Worksheet at the end of the syllabus to plan your semester.

Notice that lack of planning or tardiness would not constitute a valid reason for any exceptions for the schedule. Work that would be submitted late would be penalized according to the criteria detailed above.

- c. The seminar requires students to attend two of the meetings of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly and to write reports based on their observations. These meetings would take place in York University over the weekends. Students have to plan accordingly. Students who cannot attend these meetings should speak to me at the beginning of the semester.
- d. The seminar would not meet on October 2 (due to the Jewish Day of Atonement) and October 9 (Thanksgiving, University closed).
- e. Students are expected to maintain academic integrity and honesty. Plagiarism will be punished according to the guidelines provided in the "Academic Offences & Discipline Procedures."
- f. In addition to the online postings, keep a printed copy and an electronic copy of all your papers and coursework until you receive your grade for the course.
- g. The course outline and reading schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Readings:

Readings for the seminar are available from three sources: Course packet which is available in the U of T Bookstore, online resources open to all, and online resources that require access through the U of T library. Links to the online sources are available on the course's website (<http://ccnet.utoronto.ca/20069/pol484h1f/>)

Also, items on the course packet are available on short-term loan in the Robarts Library.

Course Outline and Reading Schedule:

Meeting 1 (September 11)

Topics: Introduction.

Meeting 2 (September 18)

Topics: A primer on the Citizens' Assembly and Electoral Systems.

Readings:

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Introduction: the Concept of Representation," in *Representation*, ed. Hannah Pitkin (Atherton Press, 1969), 1-23 [course packet].

Pippa Norris, "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1997): 297-312 [online].

British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reforms, *Making Every Vote Count: the Case for Electoral Reform in British Columbia* (final report) [online].

Election Act, Ontario Regulation 82/06, Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform [online].

Archon Fung, "Deliberation's Darker Side: A Discussion with Iris Marion Young and Jane Mansbridge," *National Civic Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (2004): 47-54 [online].

Historical Foundations of Modern Democratic Theory

Meeting 3 (September 25)

Topics: the Greek and the Republican Traditions

Readings:

Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 13-33 [course packet].

C. B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 9-22 [course packet].

Thucydides, "Pericles's Funeral Oration" [online].

[readings for this meeting continue on the next page...]

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. The section on “Social Condition of the Anglo-Americans,” and the first part of the section on “The Necessity of Examining the Condition of the States Before that of the Union at Large” (up to the subsection on “The Counties of New England”) [online].

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 171-184 (Book 11, sections 1-7) [online].

Meeting 4 (October 2)

Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement) – No Class.

Meeting 5 (October 9)

Thanksgiving – No class

Meeting 6 (October 16)

Topics: Rights, Liberties, the Tyranny of Monarchs and the Tyranny of the Majority

Readings:

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters 7-12, 18 (pp. 138-169; 192-197) [online].

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 6-21, 49 (bottom of the page) – 52 [online].

Meeting 7 (October 23)

Topic: The Marxist Tradition: Between “Bourgeoisie Democracy” and “True Democracy”

Readings

August H. Nimtz, Jr. "Marxism" *The Oxford Companion to the Politics of the World*, 2e. Joel Krieger, ed. Oxford University Press Inc. 2001. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press [online].

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, sections I and II (1-21) [online].

Rosa Luxemburg, selections from *The Russian Revolution*: sections of The Constituent Assembly, The Question of Suffrage, The Problem of Dictatorship, Democracy and Dictatorship [online].

Meeting 8 (October 30)

Topic: Democracy and Bureaucracy, the early 20th century debate

Readings:

Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (Harper & Row, 1950), pp. 250-283 [course packet]

John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Ohio University Press, 1954 [1927]), pp. 75-142 [course packet].

Contemporary Issues

Meeting 9 (November 6)

Topic: Representation of Groups, Political Aspects

Readings:

Melissa S. Williams, *Voice, Trust, and Memory* (Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3-22, 203- 243 [course packet].

Meeting 10 (November 13)

Topic: Deliberative Democracy

Readings:

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Belknap Press, 1996), 1-51 [course packet].

Jon Elster, "The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory," in J. Elster & A. Hylland (eds.), *Foundations of Social Choice Theory* (Cambridge University Press), 104-132 [course packet].

James Bohman, "Survey Article: The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1998): 400-425 [online].

Meeting 11 (November 20)

Topic: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly

Meeting with Susan Pigott, the Executive Lead on Citizen Engagement at the Secretariat of Ontario' Citizens' Assembly.

Meeting 12 (November 27)

Topic: Mini Publics

Archon Fung, "Survey Article: Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (2003): 338-367 [online].

Robert E. Goodin and John S. Dryzek, "Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics," *Politics & Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2006): 219-244 [online].

Mark B Brown, "Survey Article: Citizen Panels and the Concept of Representation," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2006): 203-25 [online].

Meeting 13 (December 4)

Final Paper is due.

Topics: Democracy beyond the Nation State

Readings:

David Held, "Cosmopolitanism: Globalisation tamed?," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2003): 465-480 [online].

John S. Dryzek, "Transnational Democracy," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1999): 30-51 [online].

John S. Dryzek, "Transnational Democracy in an Insecure World," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2006): 101-119 [online].

Working with the Blog:

Assignments for this class would be posted to the seminar's blog: (<http://pol484.blogspot.com/>).

Students registered in the class will receive an email invitation to join the blog. Students are required to choose a pseudonym, that will be shared with me, and not to use their real identity. Since the blog is open and can be read by anyone (and are kept posted indefinitely), I ask for anonymity to protect the privacy of students and to allow free discussion without worries. I do not want students to encounter questions in future job interviews on material they posted as a requirement in the seminar. However, since publicity is an important democratic virtue and it is desirable that citizens would be able to share their views openly, later in the semester students may choose to disclose their real identity after consulting with me.

When writing the essays, keep in mind that they are written to the general public. Try to communicate your ideas clearly and forcefully, explain the terminology that you use, and avoid statements that are too general (such as, "since the dawn of history, people always...") or unsubstantiated. Be respectful to your interlocutors (students, other bloggers, readers, commentators), and to the members of the assembly. Do not avoid criticism, but find the way to present the criticism in a respectful way.

Students are encouraged to add posts and comments beyond what is required and thus to create a lively and informative blog. When students submit a posting that is part of the requirements, they have to inform me via email that this posting is for the purpose of the course requirements. They will receive feedback and the grade for the assignment via email (grades would be accessible also through the course website).

Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to read the required texts before class and to be ready to contribute to class discussion, which will be the center of the seminar. They are also expected to contribute regularly to the seminar's blog.

Seminar Presentation and Class Paper:

In each class session, one or two students will lead the discussion after giving a short presentation. The presentation has to provide the following:

1. Brief background on the authors and the texts we are reading (who is the author, when was the text written, in what circumstances). For texts that were written recently, this component can be very short, mentioning only the institutional affiliation and other major publications of the author.

2. An analytical summary of the main questions that the readings raise. Notice that you are not asked to summarize the texts, but to identify the main problems or questions that they address and the kind of answer they provide.
3. Possible implications for the citizens' assembly (see below).
4. Suggestion topics for discussion, such as: questions about difficult parts of the texts, inconsistencies in the argument, the strengths or shortcomings of the arguments, comparison of the readings, relevance to the Citizens' Assembly, etc.

The presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long. It is your responsibility to make the presentation lively and interesting to your fellow students. Simply reading from a paper does not make for a good presentation. Study aids, such as tables, diagrams, or selected quotes would be a welcomed addition. The students that are presenting are expected to take a leading role in organizing class discussion.

Following class discussion, the students who presented have to post to the blog an essay which explains (based on class discussion) the readings and discusses their relevance to the members of the Citizens' Assembly. Readings can be relevant in at least four ways: they can offer insight regarding the subject matter the assembly discusses (comparison of electoral systems), they can offer insights regarding the processes of deliberations and decision making within the assembly itself, they can address the question of the legitimacy of citizens' assemblies as a form of representation, and they can provide general background that the members of the assembly should find relevant.

The essay should be approximately 1250-1500 words (1½ -2 pages long, single spaces, 12 point font, students may choose to write more if they wish, but don't overtax the patience of your readers; brevity can be a virtue). It should refer to the readings, cite them when necessary, and include references (any reference style is acceptable as long as it is used consistently).

Essay should be submitted by the end of the week following the seminar: the seminar is on Monday, and the essay should be posted online by 6pm of the following Friday.

Citizens' Assembly Observation Reports:

Students are asked to attend two sessions of the Citizens' Assembly (which will take place during the weekends: schedule of meetings is posted on the assembly's website). In each session, the observation should be at least 90 minutes long. One observation has to be made by the assembly meeting of October 28-29. Reports has to be submitted by 6pm the following Friday after the observation.

Based on the observation, post to the blog a report in which you discuss the meeting. The report should be at least 1250-1500 words long (again, you can choose to write more). It has to include a brief description of the setting: date and time, topics discussed and any other relevant information. Then, the report could include the following:

1. Engagement with the content of the discussion. Did they get it right?
2. Observations about the procedures. To what extent the content and the frames of discussion were dictated by the organizers. Was the discussion focused, efficient.
3. Observations about the participants: who participates, who asks questions (same people, gender differences, age differences), what kind of questions are being asked, etc.
4. Any recommendations, suggestions, solutions....

Feel free to be creative in your posting. You can use photos, recordings, video clips etc. (though these are not required and are not a substitute for the content!).

Comments:

Students are encouraged to comment on their peer's contributions. However, each student needs to submit four comments to be graded. Two of the comments have to respond to a class report and two to Citizens' Assembly Observations Reports.

Comments to be graded should be submitted no longer than 3 days (72 hours) following the original post. One comment of each type has to be submitted by November 1.

Each comment has to be at least 300-600 words long. Comments on class reports have to refer to the readings and to use citations and references. Notice that the comments have to respond in some way to the original posting and have to have some meaningful substance to it (beyond "great work...").

Final Paper:

In the final paper 3000-3500 words, you have to discuss in details one aspect of the Citizens' Assembly in light of the readings and your observations of the deliberations. The essay should discuss the relevant readings and follow academic format. It is required to consult with me on the topic of the essay.

The paper should be posted on the blog by the last meeting of the seminar (Monday, December 4, 10am).

Personal Assignment Worksheet

Assignment:	% of grade	Planned Date	√ when submitted	Due
Class presentation + paper	20%			Paper due by 6pm of the Friday of the week of the presentation
Reports on Citizens' Assembly:				Reports are due by 6pm of the Friday that follows the meeting
1 st report	15%			Before or of the meeting of October 28-29
2 nd report	15%			
Comments:				No later than 72 hours following the original post 1 st comment by November 1.
1 st comment on class paper	2.5%			
2 nd comment on class paper	2.5%			
1st comment on Observation	2.5%			
2nd comment on Observation	2.5%			
Final Paper	30%			By Monday, December 4, 10am.
Attendance & Participation	10%			