

Freedom, Justice, and Democracy (Phil 408Y)

University of Maryland - Fall 2013

Meetings: Wednesdays 2-3:15pm in Jimenez 2206

Instructor: Michael Zenz

Email: zenz@umd.edu

Office: Skinner 1120B

Office hours: Monday, noon-2pm (and by appointment)

Required Texts (Available at The University Book Store)

- Robert A. Dahl (1991). *Democracy and its Critics*. Yale University Press.
- A. John Simmons (2007). *Political Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- All other texts will be provided on ELMS.

Course Description

The 20th century saw an unprecedented spread of democracy in the world, and with the recent “Arab Spring” uprisings in the Middle East and Africa it would seem that this trend has continued into the 21st century. It is typically thought, especially among westerners, that this is good in itself and that democracy should be encouraged. However, we will see in this class that things are more complicated than they may at first seem. For example, Egypt recently held its first free popular elections after decades of autocratic rule, and although the people of Egypt were granted a popular voice, the new democratic government seemed eager to violate some civil liberties and was largely unable to provide basic services to the people. These problems were so severe that many commentators were ambivalent when in June the democratically elected government was itself overthrown by the military. This example hints at some questions that we will attempt to answer this semester:

- What are the requirements for a state to be considered a democracy?
- What authority do democratic states have to redistribute wealth and other scarce resources? Is it permissible to violate property rights in the process?
- How should we conceive of political representation? What links a representative to the people she represents?
- How should democratic states make decisions? Should they ask “the people”? Should they let experts decide? Should they deliberate?
- How important are elections to a well-functioning democratic state? How should elections be structured?

Requirements

- 10% - Attendance and Participation** Attendance record and quality of in-class contributions.
- 15% - Weekly Reading Posts** \approx 600 word post summarizing and discussing the reading material for that week. It must be posted to the ELMS discussion board **before** class begins every week. More details will be provided in class.
- 10% - Midterm Exam** In-class exam on material from weeks 1 through 5. $\frac{1}{3}$ of test material will only come from reading material, and another $\frac{1}{3}$ will only come from in-class and online lectures.
- 15% - First Draft of Term Paper** More details to follow.
- 35% - Term Paper** Research paper (\approx 3,000 words) on a topic chosen by the student. Topics must be pre-cleared by instructor. Detailed instructions will be released in early October.
- 15% - Final Exam** Timed “open-book” online exam. It can be started any time during finals week, though it must be completed in the specified amount of time once begun.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities (or other issues that may influence a student’s grade) should inform the instructor of their needs as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Academic Integrity

I take incidents of academic dishonesty very seriously. I will forward to the office of judicial programs any possible cases of it that come to my attention. The Student Honor Council identifies four types of academic dishonesty: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes dishonesty of these four types.

Please consult the Student Honor Council Website at www.shc.umd.edu. If you would like any further clarification, e.g., on what constitutes plagiarism, please speak with me.

Tentative Schedule

Unit	Week	Class Date	Topic	Reading
Introduction	1	9/4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahl, chaps. 1 - 3 • Simmons, chaps. 1 - 3
	2	9/11	The Modern Democratic State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahl, chaps. 4 - 8 • Simmons, chap. 5
The Legislature	3	9/18	Political Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahl, chaps. 15-19 • Pitkin(1967) selections
	4	9/25	Logic of Social Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahl, chap. 10-13
	5	10/2	Elite Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schumpeter(1950) selections • Weber(1968) selections
Distributive Justice	6	10/9	Justice as Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmons, chap. 4 • Rawls(1971) selections • Nozick(1974) selections • Harsanyi(1982)
	7	10/16	Midterm Exam <i>only on material from weeks 1-5</i>	
	8	10/23	The Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardin(1968) • Sen(1985)
	9	10/30	The Welfare State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen(1979) • Fraser and Gordon(1994)
The Liberal State	10	11/6	Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feinberg(1985) selections • Galston(2004)
	11	11/13	Paternalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dworkin(1972)
Participation	12	11/20	The Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohen(1989) • Ackerman and Fiskin(2002)
11/27 Draft of Paper Due in class or to my (non-electronic) mail-box by class time.				
	13	11/27	Public Opinion Polling	No Readings!
	14	12/4	Discussion of Papers in class	
	15	12/11	American Democracy Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APSA task-force report • Responses to APSA
		12/18	Term paper due	
		12/12 - 12/19	Complete (timed) online final exam	