Course: PSCI 6352, Empirical Democratic Theory

Professor: Robert Lowry

Term: Spring 2018

Meetings: Thursday 1:00-3:45 pm, GR 4.204

Professor’s Contact Information

Office Phone: 972-883-6720
Office Location: Green Hall 3.533
Email Address: robert.lowry@utdallas.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:30, Thursday 4-5, or by appointment

General Course Information

Course Description: The goals of this course are: (1) to make students conversant in some of the major controversies in normative democratic theory throughout history; (2) to train students to understand how this theory has shaped empirical investigations in contemporary political science; and (3) to understand how the findings of empirical research, in turn, have contributed to normative theories about democracy today.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Explain how empirical and normative work come together in empirical democratic theory.
2. Assess critically the theoretical assumptions that underlie empirical work in democracy theory.
3. Assess the state of the research literature in various fields involving empirical democratic theory, including participation and representation.

Required Texts & Materials:

The following books should be purchased from the campus bookstore or your favorite alternative supplier:


The following book is available through the McDermott Library website as an eBook, but you may want to purchase your own copy:


Additional readings are listed at the end of the syllabus and indicated in the assignments by numbers in brackets. The list of readings may be revised as we proceed.

Students are not required to print materials available electronically.

### Academic Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Readings/Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>THE BIG PICTURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>Classic democracies and alternatives</td>
<td>Held, Intro &amp; ch. 1-4; Dahl Intro &amp; ch. 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>The democratic process and large-scale democracy</td>
<td>Dahl ch. 6-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>Modern variants and the future</td>
<td>Held, ch. 5, 6, 10, 11; Held pp. 231-238, 246-255; Dahl ch. 22-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>Variations in democratic institutions</td>
<td>Lijphart ch. 1-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 15</td>
<td>Institutions (cont.); Who benefits from democracy?</td>
<td>Lijphart, ch. 14-17; [1]-[3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>Democratization; Illiberal democracy</td>
<td>[4]-[5]; Zakaria, ch. 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td><strong>ISSUES AND PROBLEMS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Midterm exam</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>Voting rules and public choice models of democracy</td>
<td>[6]-[10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td><strong>No class – Spring Break</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Representation and participation</td>
<td>[11]-[16]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Bureaucracy and administration</td>
<td>[17]-[21]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Direct democracy</td>
<td>[22], [23] Zakaria, pp. 187-198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>Deliberative democracy</td>
<td>Fishkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>Social capital and civil society</td>
<td>Putnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Final exam due, 5 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Criteria

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

- Class participation - 20%
- In-class midterm exam March 1 – 25%
- Take-home final exam distributed April 26 and due May 3 – 25%
- In-class presentation of paper work in progress April 12 – 5%
- Final term paper due April 26 – 25%

The midterm exam will cover material through February 22. The term paper is described in the “Notes on the Term Paper” section that follows. Topics are due in class February 15. Students will make in-class presentations of their work in progress. These should be relatively polished presentations, although you do not have to hand in the paper yet; the idea is that you will take feedback from the presentation and incorporate it into your final paper due on the last day of class.

Late Work and Make-up Exams

Late papers and take-home exams will be penalized 20% for each day (including weekends) they are late without a legitimate excuse, which generally means a documented medical, family or work emergency. If for any reason you will have trouble being in class for student presentations, notify me in advance.

Class Attendance

Attendance is mandatory at student presentations April 12. Attendance on other days is expected, and unexcused absences will affect your class participation score.

Other UTD Policies

Additional UTD policies regarding student conduct and discipline, academic integrity, email use, withdrawing from class, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, religious holy days, and resources to help you succeed can be found at http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.
Notes on the Term Paper

For the term paper, you should write a critical analysis of the literature on a particular question; a theoretically-driven case study; or a design for an empirical research project. Papers should be about 12-15 double-spaced pages of text and footnotes (maximum 12-point font), plus a list of references and any appendices, tables or figures.

Below are a few thoughts on each of the options:

Critical Analysis

A critical analysis of the literature is not just a summary. The goal is to draw on existing research to analyze and answer an important question about democratic theory and its empirical applications.

The paper should start by identifying a research question and explaining why it is important. Examples of the kinds of questions that might be addressed include:
- Under what conditions should majoritarian or consensual approaches to democracy be preferred?
- Why do (or don’t) people vote, and why should we care?
- Are ballot initiatives as a form of direct democracy a good idea?
- Are majority-minority districts and/or gender quotas for representative bodies good ideas?
- Under what conditions is it legitimate for the candidate or party who wins an election to claim that they have a “mandate” from the voters?

It should then summarize existing research that is relevant to the question, identify the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments, and seek to come to a conclusion. If further research is required on a specific topic in order to answer the larger question, identify the topic and state how the answer could influence your final conclusion.

Case Study

A case study seeks to answer a research question through a detailed examination of one (or perhaps more) real political systems or events. Interesting case studies often are those that test a theory by applying it to a situation where it may seem counterintuitive, or explain why some cases may be exceptions to the general rule.

A well-written case study must do at least two things in addition to analyzing the case itself: (1) explain why the case to be studied is an interesting and important one for the development of theories about democracy; (2) address the issue of generalizability. Is this a “representative” case that gives us insights into other situations and if so, how do you define the population that this case represents? Is it an exceptional case and if so, how does it limit the extent to which the theory can be generalized?
It is often useful to contrast two or more cases that represent different variations, but the tradeoff is that the more cases you address, the less detail you can present on each one.

A few possible topics:
- Does direct democracy work better in Switzerland than California, and if so why?
- Why has India been able to sustain a democratic system, given its relative lack of economic development and cultural homogeneity?

**Empirical Research Design**

The goal for this option is to develop a plan that could be used to conduct an original, empirical investigation. It should include the following elements:

1. A statement of the research question. Why is it an interesting/important question? What contribution will be made to the academic literature or contemporary policy debates?
2. A brief summary of previous research on this question.
3. One or more testable hypotheses to be explored. Explain the reasoning behind each hypothesis.
4. Identification of the relevant dependent, independent, and control variables to be studied.
5. A plan for operationalizing key variables and collecting data.
6. Identification of techniques for analyzing the data and testing the hypotheses, to the extent you can.
7. Discussion of problems that you might encounter.

The project should be one that a graduate student might actually complete. Possible research questions might include:
- What are some of the implications of legislative term limits for representation?
- Under what conditions is deliberative democracy feasible and desirable?
- Is Acemoglu’s and Robinson’s theory of the origins of democracy supported by the experience of countries other than the ones included in their study?

**Style**

The paper should begin with a short (no more than 150 words) abstract.

Papers should be well organized and use subheadings to denote major sections.

Pages should be numbered.

You don’t have to use either footnotes or endnotes, but if you do I prefer footnotes.

For citation style, consult “The Chicago Manual of Style Online” (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) and use the author-date system.
ADDITIONAL READINGS

The following readings can be accessed electronically. Those so designated will be posted on our course eLearning page. The others may be found by searching for the author (in the case of eBooks) or journal title on the UTD library website and then browsing for the relevant edition.


You can skip section 11.2


