

Comparative Democracies

Colgate University

Instructor

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Office Hours:

M & W: 10:20-11:20 & 1:20-2:20 in my office in Spear House, room #5, or by appointment.



Class

POSC 208
Spring 2020

Room: Persson 109
Time: MWF 9:20-10:10

Class Description

This class is an exploration of one of the most influential political ideas of all time: democracy. Is democracy “natural” to human beings – or in some way uniquely fitted to human nature? Is it just? Is it for all people, everywhere? We will explore democracy’s origins, its spread in modern times, and evaluate the power and weaknesses of democratic ideals. Through analyzing competing systems of democratic governance around the world today, we will gain a sense of democracy’s malleability and its uses, and also the particular dangers and challenges that democracies face. Along with thinkers both new and old, we will step back and evaluate the meaning of living in a world of democracies.

Required Texts

The following books are required for the class.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and abridged by Michael Kammen. Bedford/St. Martin’s Publishing, Boston: 2009. ISBN: 978-0-312-46330-4

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, Currency Publishing, New York: 2012. ISBN 978-0-307-71922-5

Adam Przeworski, *Crises of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press: 2019 ISBN 978-1-108-49880-7

In addition, there will be several articles posted on Moodle. A full list of the reading schedule is attached at the end of the syllabus.

Class Methodology and Requirements

The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

Prior to every class session, it is mandatory that each student has read the assigned readings listed for that day.

- **Participation and Attendance (5%).** Do all assigned readings listed for each day and be ready to contribute to the discussion. Unexplained absences will result in the loss of a point.
- **Democracies Geography Quiz (5%).**
- **Two Response Papers (30%, 15% each).** These are two short response papers (about five pages long) interpreting class readings and cases.
- **Midterm Exam (30%).** A midterm exam on the materials from the first part of the class.
- **Final Exam (30%).** A final exam on the second part of class.

Late work will be accepted with a penalty of one grade level per day. If there is an unforeseen emergency that conflicts with your progress in the course, please contact the professor.

Class Objectives

This class will improve your core knowledge of the world and democratic ideas and systems. In addition, it is designed to facilitate your ability to think critically, weigh arguments, and express your best ideas in writing.

Grading Scale

93% A	73% C
90% A-	70% C-
87% B+	67% D+
83% B	63% D
80% B-	60% D-
77% C+	<60% F

Please contact the teacher at any time to discuss your progress in the course. Grades for each assignment will be posted on Moodle as they are returned.

Academic Integrity

Needless to say, plagiarism (the use of someone else's work—a couple of sentences or a whole paper—without giving them explicit credit) will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of F on any piece of class work. See the Student Handbook for details. Similarly, cheating on an exam will receive an immediate F and a referral to the Dean. Avoid the temptation to cheat by contacting the professor for help ahead of time.

Learning Services

If you have a disability that prevents you from doing as well as you could in this class, be sure to contact Lynn Waldman, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services, to discuss your specific needs and set up arrangements with the professor. Lynn's office is in the Center for Learning, Teaching and Research, and you can email her at lwaldman@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

Classroom Etiquette

At all times, please act with respect toward the professor and toward your classmates. *Mentally set aside the entire class period as a time for pursuing greater knowledge of this subject.* Please no talking during lectures, no cell phones or other nifty electronic devices.

WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 – The Idea of Democracy: The Greeks and Romans

January 20

Introductory Lecture

January 22

Moodle: Herodotus, The Persian Debate; Plutarch, Pericles' Funeral Oration

January 24

Moodle: Plato, Book 8 of the Republic; Polybius.

Week 2 – The Idea of Democracy: The American Founding

January 27

Moodle: Federalist Papers, #10

January 29

Moodle: Stephen Douglas, The Second Joint Debate; Theodore Roosevelt, The Right of the People to Rule

January 31

Tocqueville: Preface and Introduction

Week 3 – Tocqueville's Reflections on America

February 3

Tocqueville: Chapter 1, 2, 3 & 4 (43-62)

February 5

Tocqueville: Chapter 5, 6, 7 & 8 (62-81)

February 7

Tocqueville: Chapter 9, 10 (84 - 95)

Week 4 – Tocqueville’s Reflections on America

February 10

Tocqueville: Preface to Volume II, Chapter 11, 12, 13, 14 (96-109)

February 12

Tocqueville: Chapter 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 (109- 122)

February 14

Tocqueville: Chapter 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 & 25 (122- 140)

Week 5 – Tocqueville’s Reflections on America

February 17

Tocqueville: Chapter 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (140-154)

February 19

Tocqueville: Chapter 31- end (154-170)

February 20

Moodle: Intro to Comp Politics

Essay 1 Due

Week 6 – Comparative Systems: Democracy in Practice

February 24

Moodle: US & UK

February 26

Moodle: France

February 28

Moodle: Germany

Geography Quiz

Week 7 – Comparative Systems: Democracy in Practice

March 2

Moodle: Japan

March 4

Moodle: India

March 6

Moodle: Mexico

Week 8 – Comparative Systems: Democracy in Practice

March 9

Moodle: Brazil

March 11

Review

March 13

Exam

Midterm Exam – March 13

Spring Break: March 14-22

Week 9 – Democracy & Prosperity

March 23

Acemoglu: Preface, Chps. 1 & 2 (1-69)

March 25

Acemoglu: Chps. 3 & 4 (70-123)

March 27

Acemoglu: Chps. 5 & 6 (124-181)

Week 10 – Democracy & Prosperity

March 30

Acemoglu: Chps. 8 & 9 (182-273)

April 1

Acemoglu: Chps. 10 & 11 (274-334)

April 3

Acemoglu: Chps. 12 & 13 (335-403)

Week 11 – Democracy & Prosperity

April 6

Acemoglu: Chps. 14 & 15: 404-462.

April 8

Discussion Day

April 10

TBD

Essay 2 Due

Week 12 –

April 13

Przeworski: Intro & Chp. 1 (1-27)

April 15

Przeworski: Chp. 2 & 3 (29-77)

April 17

Przeworski: Chp. 4 & 5 (78-102)

Week 13 –

April 20

Przeworski: Chps. 6 & 7 (103-132)

April 22

Przeworski: Chp. 8 & 9 (133-171)

April 24

Przeworski: Chp. 10 & 11 (172-206)

Week 14 – Discussion and Review

April 27

April 29

May 1

Final Exam – Thursday, May 7, 12-2