Democracy and Difference

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This seminar focuses on what political theorists call "democratic theory," which addresses the defining institutions, cultural meanings, inherent difficulties, and contemporary crisis of specifically "democratic" forms of political life. We begin by reviewing classical and contemporary formulations of what democracy is, for what can be called liberal, deliberative, communitarian, and agonistic approaches entail very different definitions of democracy, contrasting senses of its dangers and possibilities, as well as divergent visions of citizenship and public life, political culture and modernity. Then we consider these approaches in relation to the issue of difference: how do they explain and address the persistence of racialized and gendered forms of inequality in regimes committed to formal and legal equality? Why are formally democratic societies typically characterized by intense struggle over issues of identity and difference, not only race, gender, and sexuality, but also immigration? Our seminar concludes by exploring the relation between democratic regimes and empire, state violence, and national security: how does "democracy" become the name for a regime engaged in permanent war, torture, surveillance of citizens, and suspension of civil liberties?

Course Objectives/Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of and be able to discuss competing democratic theories
- Be able to critically assess and interpret various models of democracy
- Discuss the ways in which democratic models have historically excluded various groups or individuals either implicitly or explicitly

Required Texts:


Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2010.


**Required Assignments:**

Students are required to write a two-page response paper to each week’s readings. These essays are due at the beginning of each class session. The aim of the papers is to allow students to develop their thoughts and reactions to the reading assignments in preparation for class discussion. The intention is also to give students the opportunity to improve their critical writing skills. As students will be continuously writing throughout the term, no final seminar paper will be due. As a seminar based largely on class discussion, active participation and attendance are imperative. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect the final grade.

**Grading:**

Weekly Papers: 70% (the lowest two grades will be dropped)

Participation and Attendance: 30 %

**Academic Integrity:**

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise
the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)

Electronic Devices:

Laptops and Tablets are allowed for note taking only. Cell phones should be turned off.

Seminar Schedule:

January 30:
*Introduction

February 6:
* Foucault. Discipline and Punish. Introduction and Chapter, Panopticism. Part One (pp. 3-31) & Part Three, Chapter Three (pp. 195-228)
* First essay due.

February 13:
Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A Discourse on Inequality. (Entire Text, pp. 9-138)
* Second Essay Due

February 20:
* Hannah Arendt. The Human Condition. Parts I, V (pp. 7-17 & 175-248)
* Carlos Forment. “Peripheral Peoples and Narrative Identities: Arendtian Reflections on Late Modernity.” In Benhabib (ed.) Democracy and Difference (pp. 314-330)
* Third Essay Due.

February 28:
* Sheldon Wolin. “Fugitive Democracy.” In Benhabib (ed.). Democracy and Difference (pp. 31-45).
* Jürgen Habermas. “Three Normative Models of Democracy.” In Benhabib (pp. 21-30)
* Seyla Benhabib. “Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy.” In Benhabib (pp. 67-94).
* Nancy Fraser. “Gender Equity and the Welfare State: A PostIndustrial Thought Experiment.” In Benhabib (pp. 218-240).
*Chantal Mouffe. “Democracy, Power, and the “Political.”” In Benhabib (pp. 245-256).
*Fourth Essay Due

March 6:
*Fifth Essay Due

March 13:
*Sixth Essay Due

March 20: Spring Recess

March 27:
*Seventh Essay Due

*Eighth Essay Due

April 10. Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy.* Introduction, Chaps 1-3 (pp. 1-120)
*Ninth Essay Due

April 17:
*Tenth Essay Due

April 24: Judith Butler. *Precarious Life.* (Entire Text, pp. 1-151)
*Eleventh Essay Due

May 1: Talal Asad. *On Suicide Bombing.* (Entire Text, pp. 1-128)
*Twelfth Essay Due

May 8: Judith Butler. *Frames of War.* (Entire Text, pp. 1-185).
* Thirteenth Essay Due