

NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Democracy and Difference
IDSEM UG 1821
Spring 2017
Fridays, 11-1:45, Gallatin 527
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Democracy and Difference

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:

Sheldon Wolin. *Democracy Incorporated*. Princeton University Press. 2008.

Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. Vintage, 1977.

Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*.

James Baldwin. *The Fire Next Time*. Vintage, 1992.

Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2012.

Judith Butler. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard University Press, 2015.

Wendy Brown. *Undoing the Demos*. MIT Press. 2015.

Talal Asad. *On Suicide Bombing*. Columbia University Press, 2007.

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. (**No late papers will be accepted** as this would defeat the aim of the assignment.) 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 one unexcused absence 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 27:

- * Introduction

February 3:

- * Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008. (Entire text.)

February 10:

- * John Locke. "On the Beginning of Political Societies." Chapter VIII In *Second Treatise on Government*. (1689) http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a_2.pdf
- * Marx. "Communist Manifesto."
- * Charles Mills. "Racial Liberalism." PMLA (2008).
<http://www.havenscenter.org/files/Mills-Racial%20Liberalism.pdf> (pp. 1380-1397)

February 17:

- * Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. Part One (pp. 3-32), Part Three, chaps 2 and 3 (170-230) and Part Four (231-308).

February 24:

- * Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*. Parts I, V (pp. 7-17 & 175-248)

March 3:

- * James Baldwin. *The Fire Next Time*. (Entire Text, pp. 1-106).

March 10:

- * Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins."
http://socialdifference.columbia.edu/files/socialdiff/projects/Article_Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf
- * Adrienne Rich. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience." JSTOR
- * "Combahee River Collective Statement."
http://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf
- Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (pp. 1-36). https://sites.evergreen.edu/politicalshakespeares/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2014/12/Said_full.pdf

March 17: Spring Recess

March 24:

- * Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow*. First half.

March 31:

- * Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow*. Second half.

April 7:

- * Wendy Brown. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. First half (pp. 1-114)

April 14:

* Bown. *Undoing the Demos*. Second half (pp. 115-222)

April 21:

* Talal Asad. *On Suicide Bombing*. (Entire Text, pp. 1-128)

April 28:

* Judith Butler. *Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly*. Introduction, Chaps. One and Two (pp. 1-98).

May 5:

* Butler. *Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly*. Chaps. Three, Four, Five. Six (pp. 99-221)