In this course we explore a number of aspects of modern democracy: its philosophical justifications, structural characteristics, and performance in terms of its public policies. We do this as a class so that each student will be able to formulate their own notions as to how things can be improved. To do this, we read a number of philosophical texts: some classical (Aristotle’s Politics), some modern (Thomas Nagel’s Equality and Partiality, Nozick’s Anarchy, State, and Utopia, and Rawls’ Theory of Justice). We supplement these with parts of Riker’s theoretical work on the way democracies make social choices. We then will focus on such basic public policy areas as justice in distribution and human rights to try to understand whether and how democracy can be improved upon.

The course is designed to build to the development and execution of a semester research project. In this final paper (due 5/20) the student is to identify an area for improvement of democratic institutions. The team and individual assignments will help to insure that the semester project is significant, as well as doable. As such, the course should be giving you a serious template for research and analysis. The final project involves 1) identifying a lacuna in political performance either as process or outcome in a democratic society of your choice; 2) proposing an institutional change, and justifying the change in terms of the improvement which could be expected. It is understood that your justifications will be either built upon, or against, the general reading materials of the course.

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

Students will have a number of assignments which should all naturally fold into a single, larger, individual project. The assignments will be both written essays and class reports and presentations; and some of these will be ‘team’ or ‘group’ projects. Individuals will receive two grades for group and team projects: one as a group and one for their contribution to the group. The precise details of this system will be discussed in class. The assignments are mentioned below in the syllabus and indicated by **.

The first team assignment is for Class 4, 2/10. There each team (based on clusters of interest developed in the first class) is to propose (i.e. hand in, in writing and present in class) some hypotheses of interest to them, and some notions of what it would take to research and perhaps justify or test their conjectures.

The second team assignment will be for presentation in classes 8 and 9, 2/24 and 2/29. There each team is to identify public sources of information relevant to their research, given the reformulation of the notions of what it would take to research and perhaps justify or test their conjectures. These should include web sites, data bases, and library materials on the specific problems they are beginning to research.

The 3rd team assignment will be handed in 3/30 and you should meet with Lynne or me by the end of the first week of April. The paper to be handed in need not be long, or fancy (couple of solid pages) but must include enough for us to know what is going on in your work. Thus, tell us: where did you look for information, what have you found, what are your realistic expectations about what you have found (e.g. some performance ranges regarding what you are looking at) in the various democracies you have focused on.

The full outline of the final individual research paper is to be handed in on 4/25. Details of what this is to include will be made available.
Finally, on Saturday, 5/20 by 11 am, the final research paper is to be handed in or submitted electronically. Although length is flexible, we are talking about 15 - 20 pages in most cases.

My objective, as a teacher in this course is to have students wrestle to integrate political and ethical philosophy, with social science so as to understand how both 1) how to justify a policy and regime change and 2) how political institutions and public policies might be improved.

The prerequisites are GVPT 100 and 241 (although one of these can be waived). Courses in philosophy or political philosophy (e.g. GVPT 441, 442), sociology, and statistics will be useful, but not required.

**GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS**

This is not a lecture course, and students will be graded on the basis of their participation (and hence attendance) in class, their individual and team written assignments, and their relative contribution to any team assignment. In class grades will be 0 for any day missed, and 1 - 5 for one's quality of work / participation in the class. There is no final examination. There are written and presentation assignments due xxxx, and the final paper is due Saturday, May 20 at 10:30. There may be pop quizzes (each worth 25 points) at any point in the course. All reading is to be done before the class for which it is assigned.

**GRADES:** The grades in the course will NOT be curved. You get what you earn. The scale is 0 - 100: a ≥ 85, b ≥ 75, c ≥ 65, d ≥ 60. F is < 60. Thus, non participation and missed assignments, which will be assigned a grade of 0, will greatly hurt the student. ALL PAPERS, QUIZES, ETC. SHOULD BE KEPT IN CASE YOU THINK I MADE AN ERROR IN ASSIGNING A GRADE, AND FOR ANY FUTURE NEED SUCH AS GRADE CORRECTION, OR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.

**Disputed grade procedures:** No grade can be disputed unless your quizzes or papers accompany your protest. The protest must be in writing: typed and must specify precisely why you think the grade was in error. All protests should be handed in within one week of the grade being returned to the student.

No papers handed in for other courses will be accepted for credit in this course unless there has been a prior agreement to that explicitly worked out with the instructor. Regarding citations: All material assigned in the course can be cited casually (e.g. "As Rawls says, p. 39, ‘...’") but note that the page number is an important portion of this citation. But material
I will try to meet any extraordinary needs of any student. Such needs can arise out of either preexisting or new conditions. All students should ask themselves if they have any special preexisting condition which should be considered by me in the grading (or other procedures) in the course. Such conditions may include personal, social, physical, emotional or other impairments. Students who wish preexisting conditions to be properly considered must inform me NO LATER THAN 2/15. When relevant, the student may be required to submit some degree of documentation regarding the condition, and a personal statement of how it impacts in the academic performance in the course, in writing. If a newly arising condition develops during the course, official and personal documentation WILL be required. Further, whenever possible, the student is obligated to inform me of the conditions as they arise, and not after the consequences (e.g. missed exams) occur.

READING MATERIALS

Students are expected to have available (which usually means purchase) the following books (all but Aristotle will be available in the library reserve room).

Books: (TOTAL Amazon prices, new = $65 + xeroxes).


A reading packet of xeroxed materials is available from Bel Jean's and should include the following items which are shown on the syllabus preceded by a "*.") A copy of all these readings is also available at the reserve desk. These include:


The following will be distributed separately: Frohlich, Norman and Joe A. Oppenheimer (1990) "Choosing Justice in Experimental Democracies with Production" American Political Science Review, v. 84, #2 (June): pp. 461-477. JA1.A6

**COURSE OUTLINE: READINGS & OTHER ASSIGNMENTS**

**Part I: What is democracy and how is it justified? (4.5 weeks: 2/1 - 2/29):**

Weeks 1 & 2: Introduction and overview: (2/1-3) What is politics, and the state all about? Reviewing a classic view and a slight justification for democracy.

1. 2/1 - Introduction - what would we mean by improving democracy? Why would we say that is an improvement of democracy as opposed to more general welfare, or public policy?

2. What is politics, and the state all about? Read by 2/3: Aristotle Politics: Intro vii-xxvi and xlvi-xlvi + skim handout outline to get a sense of the whole work. Then read Book 1 (all; pp. 7 - 37)

3. Read by 2/8: Aristotle Politics: Book 2 (ch. 1-3, 5; pp. 38-43; 45-51); Book 3 (ch. 1-13; pp. 84-120); Bk 4 (Ch. 2, 4; pp. 135-137, 139-146);

4. Read by 2/10: Aristotle Politics: Bk 5 (end of ch 9; pp. 208-9); Bk 6 (ch. 2,4,5; pp. 231-233, 235 -242)

** Student team reports on cluster of ideas from Week 1. **

Weeks 3 - 5: A stronger or a weaker justification for democracy - some possible views, overview 2/15 - 2/29.

5. Is there a possible positive understanding of the people’s decisions? Read by 2/15: *Riker, pp. 1-22  – NOTE: CLASS ON Tues. Feb. 15th will be held in McKeldin Library Room 4133 with Gerri Foudi.

6. How do we get to and understand what should be the rights of self and others? Read by 2/17: Nagel, Introduction.


** Student team reports on cluster of ideas from Week 1, class 4. **

**Part II - Justifying Democracy: By the quality of outcomes:**

**Individual Moral Autonomy, & Justice**

(5 weeks: 3/2 - 4/13):


12. Read by 3/9: Rawls pp. 60 - 90, 100 - 108


IMPROVING DEMOCRACY
15. & 16. 3/28, 3/30: **What are realistic expectations - reports by teams - reporting some found performance ranges (written & presentational) ** – Non-utopian outcomes? Read by 3/30, Nagel Chap. 3

17. & 18. 4/4 and 4/6 And what is utopian in distribution? Read: Nagel Chap. (7 & 8 )


**Part III - Performance: Rights and Justice**


**Final full outline of individual paper is required to be handed in.**

24. 4/27 Levy, The New Dollars and Dreams: Chap. 5

25. 5/2 Levy, The New Dollars and Dreams: Chap. 7 & 8

**Part IV - Some Problems with these Views of Democracy ( xx weeks: / - ):**

26. 5/4 Read by 5/4 Riker, 233-255; Nagel Chap. 9

27. 5/9 Nagel 13 - 15.

**Part V - Research Workshops and Reports ( xx weeks: / - ):**

28. 5/11

29. 5/16