



# SOSC 18400 1 - Democracy: Equality, Liberty, and the Dilemmas of Self-Government I - Instructor(s): John McCormick

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Autumn 2023**

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **9**

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## Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

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Creation Date: **Friday, February 2, 2024**

## What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.

Comments
I would say that would be how ordinary people, as opposed to only the writers and philosophers we commonly associate with these cities, played a role in governing their own political communities. In other words, democracy was not just an abstract idea about how a society should be governed, but was a real way of life.
The advantages and flaws with democratic systems
The ability to compare different forms of democracy whilst considering the context in which they formed / ended
I learned about how Athenian, Roman, and Florentine democracy arose, operated, flourished, and fell. From these case studies, I learned an incredible amount about the various ways democracy seeks to mediate class conflict, inclusion and exclusion, deal with foreign threats, and much more. All in all, I learned invaluable material about the history of democracy.
The system of governance and the political environment in Ancient Athens, the Roman Republic, and the Florentine Commune/Republic. We read a mixture of primary and secondary sources from all three states, and wrote two 7–10 page papers on prompts relating to what we learned in class.
The foundations of democracy and history of early republics
Learning about the issues that Athenian democracy, the Roman Republic, and the Florentine Republic faced during their respective times. Examine the conflict that existed between different classes with each of the 3 societies. Critically reading primary sources including those written by early political thinkers.

## Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed to your learning.

Comments
The readings were always on–point and featured a wide range of perspectives, both from the time and looking back. The class discussions were my favorite part, as every student would read the same opinions and then have all possible reactions to them, which led to debates and discussions which enriched everyone. Class presentations were helpful in focusing on one specific area of the reading.
Class presentations were clear at summarizing the texts and class discussions enabled the group to share ideas effectively
The nature of discussion in the classes contributed most to my understanding of the course themes
Class usually consisted of readings to prepare, a presentation by two students, and then discussion. I felt the readings and discussions were most helpful because this is where Professor McCormick really shined with his contributions and knowledge. Although, I will say the presentations were great for starting discussions as students would often pose questions I had not considered!
Prof. McCormick is amazing at guiding discussions and inserting—as I believe another course evaluation from last year stated —“mini–lectures” throughout the discussion if he thought there was anything that needed discussion. Discussions were extremely lively and engaging, and was (surprisingly!) a central aspect that helped contribute to my learning in this course.
Discussions were great for facilitating ideas. Prof. McCormick did a great job of moderating the discussion and made everyone's contributions feel valuable. He also provided clarity and context for the historical events we were discussing.
The student–made presentations that were presented at the start of every class greatly helped in reviewing the assigned readings. The presentations also helped facilitate fruitful discussions. The discussions themselves were very illuminating and students who were invested in the class would provide interesting perspectives to the readings and topics discussed. Professor McCormick was quite good at facilitating discussion and making points of clarification where necessary.

## Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	3.63	4.00	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	50.00%	12.50%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	42.86%	28.57%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.63	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	75.00%
I felt respected in this class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%

## Additional comments about the course:

Comments
Take this class!
Through the discussions and the readings, I genuinely believe that this class is the class I've enjoyed and learned the most in thus far. I would highly recommend this class to anyone interested in learning more about Athens/Rome/Florence, especially given the fact that we were able to learn from an expert in these areas.

## I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	0.00%	100.00%

## Thinking about your time in the class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

Comments
I believe that would be Prof. McCormick's ability to explain complex political structures in a way that reflected both the nominal and practical effects they had on the distribution of political and economic power.
His knowledge on democratic governments covered in the course
Students doing presentations to the class at the beginning of each class
As mentioned, Professor McCormick's commentary during discussion was most helpful.
100% the discussions. This was the best discussion-based class I've taken yet, given McCormick's ability to guide and add onto discussions without breaking the chain of thought.
Prof. McCormick made discussions engaging and everyone's contributions were taken into consideration. He made an effort to make discussions insightful and engaging and it paid off.
During each class, Professor McCormick was able to clearly explain the historical context of our readings, provide useful information about the government we were examining, and offer interesting insights into why and how they faced the problems they experienced.

## What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
He could speak a bit more; his comments were very insightful
n/a
Not sure.
It would've been a bit better to know McCormick's expectation of what a good paper looks like, perhaps through a rubric or through a sample paper. I was left during the first paper to kind of guess how I should structure the paper, though the grading ultimately was not harsh at all.
Perhaps make the Canvas page a bit more organized
Perhaps reserve a bit more time each class going over specific readings that were unclear in meaning.

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.33	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	37.50%	25.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%

**Please include the name of the TA/CA/Intern you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA/CA/Intern.**

Comments
Elena Schafer was the writing specialist, and I found her workshops helpful with regard to ordering claims and backing them up.
Elena Schafer
Elena
Elena Schafer. Her workshops and office hours were helpful!
Elena was very helpful and accessible as a writing instructor.

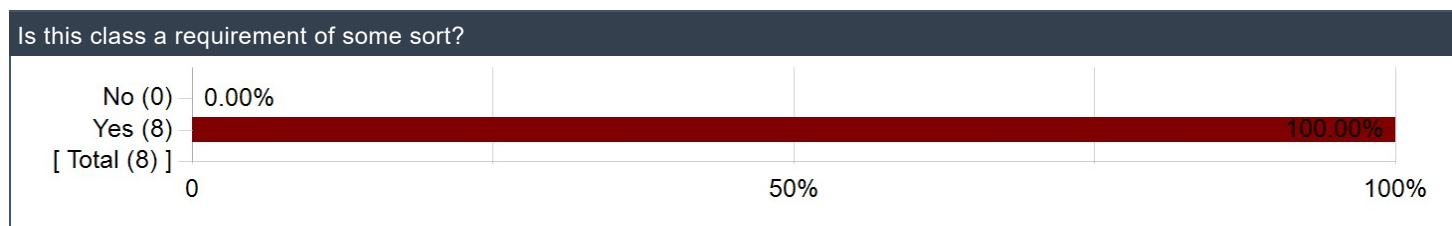
## The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.40	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%

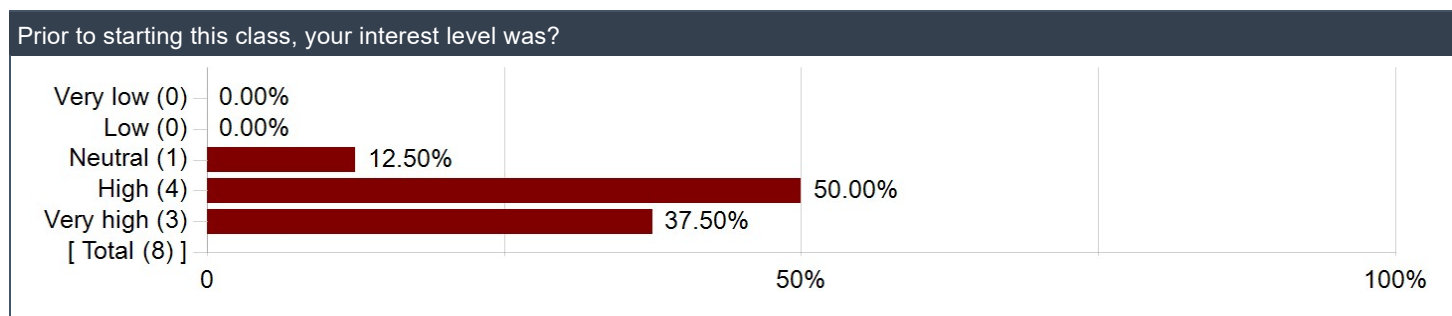
## How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	1.00	1.00	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	83.33%
Field Trips	1.00	1.00	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	83.33%
Library Sessions	1.00	1.00	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	83.33%
Review Sessions	1.00	1.00	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	83.33%
Writing Seminars	3.67	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%

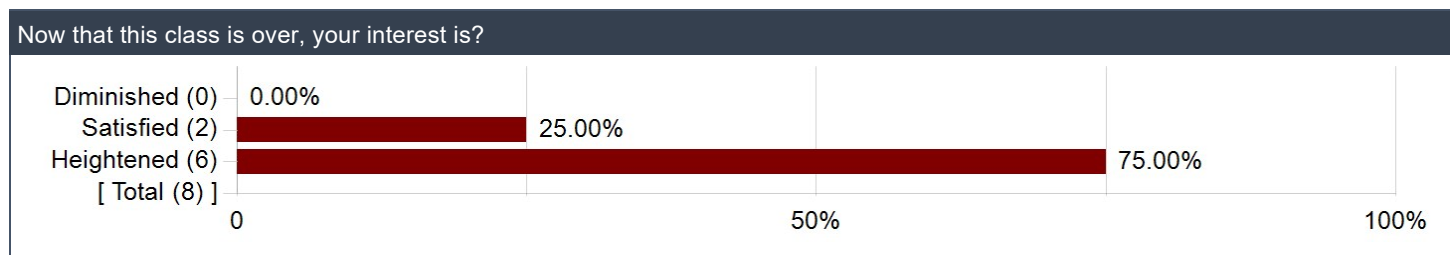
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



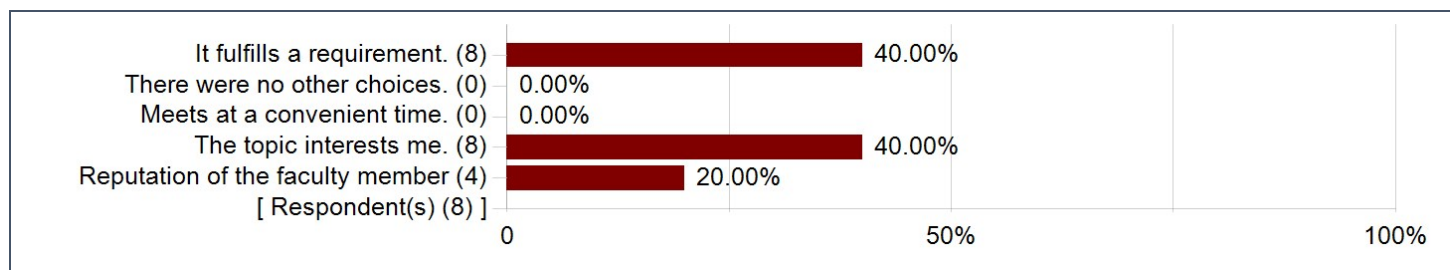
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



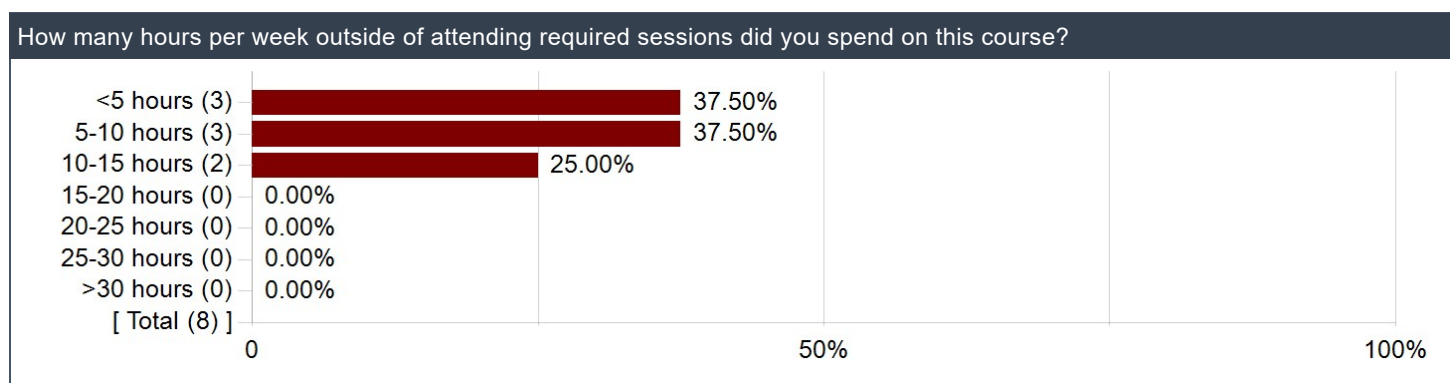
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



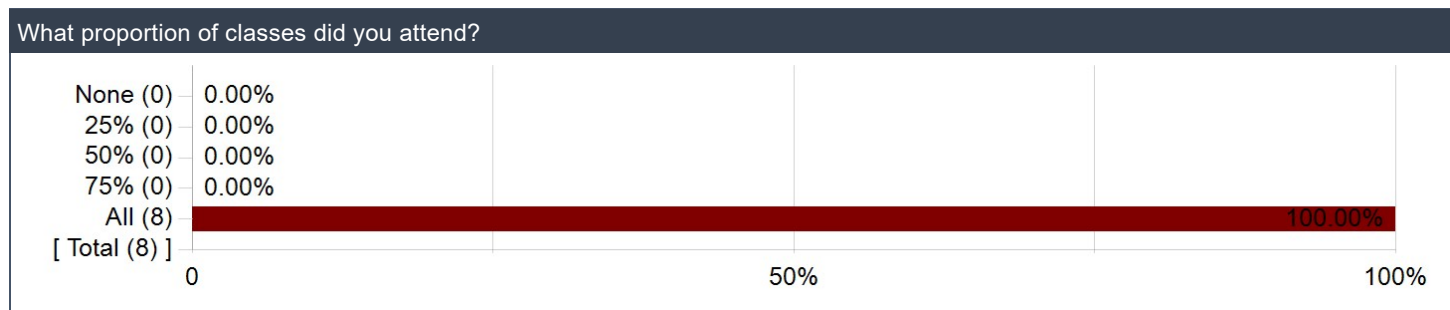
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?



## What proportion of classes did you attend?



**Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.**

Comments
The class discussions always demanded my all, but the readings were completely doable.
Though I do not have any final grades yet, actual participation in the course was possible despite being a first-year (i.e., no prior experience with UChicago classes). It requires effort, but this allows you to properly learn *a lot*.
Not difficult at all, even to someone who had little prior knowledge of all three states. The papers were not graded harshly at all, and I believe everyone did a great job with the presentation on the readings (another aspect of the course). Prof. McCormick was happy to field student questions and elaborate on items as needed.
Pretty accessible for everyone although a knowledge of history made the course more interesting/easier to follow
Not particularly difficult as long as you can follow along on the readings and stay tuned into the discussions.