



SOSC 18500 4 - Democracy: Equality, Liberty, and the Dilemmas of Self-Government II - Instructor(s): James Sparrow

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Winter 2024**

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **11**

Report Comments

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

Creation Date: **Thursday, March 28, 2024**

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

Comments
What is a democratic revolution. The history of important revolutions, and the background of them.
What democracy is and how a revolution can be democratic (or not) and how revolutions shape future governments. I also learned how to read sources at a faster rate and for the overall gist because it's a lot of reading.
We explored what causes and sustains revolutions and how the actions of revolutions lead to various lasting outcomes. I also learned how to do library research effectively.
N/A
I learned about the varying levels of democracy of many revolutions and even the difficulty of defining such a word. I learned how to judge history more critically and I learned about the various causes and effects of revolutions. I learned about power dynamics and political theory and how it connects many of the revolutions around the world from the English Civil War to the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution to the French Revolution to the Haitian Revolution to the German Revolution instating the Weimar republic to the Indian Revolution to the Czechoslovakian Velvet Revolution. I learned that democratic language is often used to justify power grabs. I learned about the liberty of the ancients (positive liberty) vs. the liberty of the moderns (negative liberty) and what this means for citizens and how it connects to different political views either for larger state involvement and larger political rights to enact various opinions within that government as opposed to others arguing for smaller government in order to safeguard against overreaches into the private liberties of the citizenry.
The prerequisites,—whether ideological or practical—behind the democratic nature of revolutions; we also learnt about how different social conditions/discrepancies generate enough momentum to foment revolutionary attitudes.
This class provided me with excellent experience with library research, analyzing the structures of governments, and discussing complex concepts. The final project also afforded me an intimate understanding with the revolution I chose to compile sources on.
The criteria for democracy and the various specific historical context and analyses related to each revolution studied, including the Glorious, French, American, Haitian, Indian, and German. Also learned skills necessary for primary document researching using library resources to contribute to our final curated project.
Democratic aspects, different revolutions
I learned so many skills and so much information that is extremely applicable to life, this has been my favorite course so far at school.
How to critically analyse these texts and relate them to the overall theme of the course.

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

Comments
Lectures were helpful, but also were very quick and sometimes it hard to understand.
Lectures are pretty important because Prof. Sparrow goes over historical background, leads debates, and goes further in depth on sources. The readings are also pretty helpful (especially for the discussion posts).
Professor Sparrow's lectures that start class are quite insightful. I'm convinced he is a walking encyclopedia for all of history. I also appreciated his emphasis on developing the skill to ask good questions. While this made discussion difficult at the start of the quarter, by the end, we were able to help sustain the seminar without completely relying on Professor Sparrow to continue the conversation. The special collections visit was helpful because it put me in contact with the reference librarians (who are a great resource).
N/A
The discussions were extremely helpful to my understanding. Prof Sparrow gave very interesting and detailed accounts of each revolution and the ideological differences that laid the groundwork for various movements and political actions. The discussion part was a little bit nerve-racking but Prof. Sparrow was very encouraging of everyone. He also utilized smaller group time and debates to get people talking. The texts were a little bit long but had great information.
Professor Sparrow usually gives a short explanation at the beginning of the lesson that covers some historical context behind the revolutionary period we're examining; it's a good idea to pay attention during those. He also encourages many ideas during discussion—just show that you're drawing your opinions from the readings.
The final project in particular was quite helpful. We were allowed to choose a single revolution to study by finding first-hand accounts of the revolution and determining what they said about the democratic nature of the revolution. It was a really great project that didn't require any work that didn't lead to a better understanding.
Class discussions and readings were the most helpful in helping understand the various aspects of democracy, and what makes a revolution democratic or not. The special collections workshop was also helpful in realizing the resources available at the library to help us in our final curated project.
Discussion posts and professor feedback and writing seminars were amazing!
Lectures we're useful in contextualising knowledge. Discussions in class were also very stimulating and interesting.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	63.64%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.27	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	36.36%	45.45%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.36	5.00	0.00%	9.09%	9.09%	18.18%	63.64%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	9.09%	72.73%
I felt respected in this class.	4.36	5.00	0.00%	9.09%	9.09%	18.18%	63.64%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	27.27%	63.64%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
This is a good course (especially if you like history) but the reading is very intense. Some of the readings are really interesting and fun to read, but others are just very long and dense and hard to fully absorb. I would say that this class also favours students who talk a lot and have had experience with texts from modern political thinkers.
N/A
Prof. Sparrow is great and knowledgable about the subject.

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
Lectures and guided discussions.
The lectures were the most useful when it came to understanding everything. Prof. Sparrow is really helpful in contextualising sources and giving brief but thorough explanations of the different revolutions.
Professor Sparrow always seemed to have a counterargument ready for any argument anyone tried to make in class. At first, this seemed like I could never make a good point; however, I have grown to appreciate this pushback. By providing the counter-perspectives, I was able to reach a new deeper understanding of the complexities of these revolutions. I also thought the in-class debates made me think deeply about the different players in the revolution.
N/A
I think that requiring research physically in the Reg library was helpful to develop researchign skills. I think that requiring an in person meeting before the first essay was great in order to foster a better relationship between himself and the students. I definitely benefited from this.
Professor Sparrow has an extremely high degree of intellectual vitality. It's quite infectious. You can tell that he puts a great deal of thought into his pedagogy and there's a lot of intention behind the discussion post prompts. He does truly care about your learning.
Professor Sparrow is an expert in the content of the course, so I think that listening to him talk was the most valuable part of the course.
Professor Sparrow's insightful questions and profound context for each revolution was super helpful.
The professor's consistent encouragement and kindness. I truly felt like I have learned a lot so far.
The instructor gave very clear instructions, and although he holds his students to a very high standard and expects high-quality work, I believe this greatly contributed to me becoming a better reader, writer, and thinker this quarter. It is the type of class where you can feel yourself learning and improving your skills and although it takes some time it is extremely rewarding.
Lecture and in-class discussions

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Slow down and explain more of the important topics.
Prof. Sparrow is very nice and interesting, but I would say that he is a little biased towards some students. He definitely favours the students who talk the most and kind of relies on them to lead the discussions. Maybe it was just my section but sometimes it felt like he let the "talkers" lead the class and not give other students a chance to speak because they just wouldn't stop talking. So I'd say that maybe he could better facilitate discussions and look to people who don't really speak as much or try to limit how much some people speak.
A few times, Professor Sparrow said something would be posted on Canvas, and then it wouldn't be posted till a week later, or one of my emails wouldn't be responded to. I felt like communication could be a bit better, but, overall I was very satisfied with my experience.
N/A
There isn't very much because he took feedback in his one on one meetings and then changed the class accordingly. For instance he did more group work with smaller groups like I and many students asked for.
I think talking slower during the contextual lectures would be helpful—also perhaps cutting down on the sheer amount of information behind placed onto students would be helpful. Oftentimes, it's hard to organize my notes and stay engaged in the discussion.
Not much. I thought the class was very well structured.
The only feedback I would have would be to create a bit less of a serious environment in class— maybe through discussions before and after class.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	18.18%	72.73%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	27.27%	63.64%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	63.64%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.45	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	36.36%	54.55%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	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
Elena Schafer. We didn't do as much this quarter as we did in the fall, but her help was still very welcome. She does a great job of laying out her workshops clearly.
Elena
Elena Schafer. Amazing at helping guide us through the course.

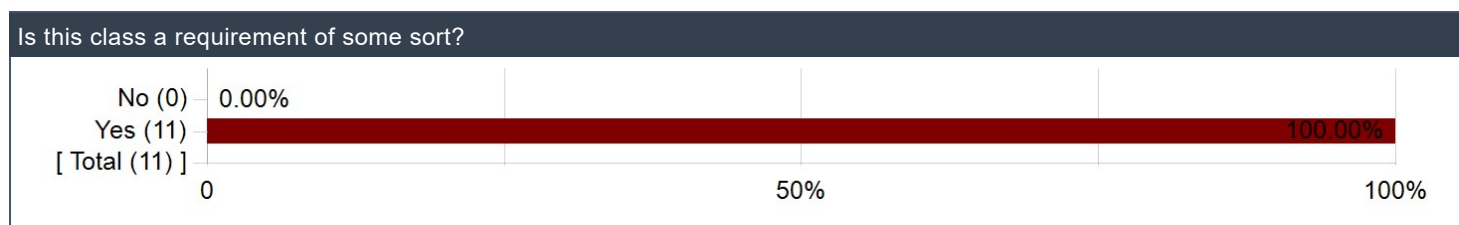
The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	3.67	4.00	0.00%	16.67%	16.67%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	3.80	4.00	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%	50.00%	16.67%	16.67%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	3.50	3.50	0.00%	16.67%	33.33%	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	3.83	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	3.33	3.50	16.67%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.33	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	3.00	3.00	16.67%	16.67%	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%

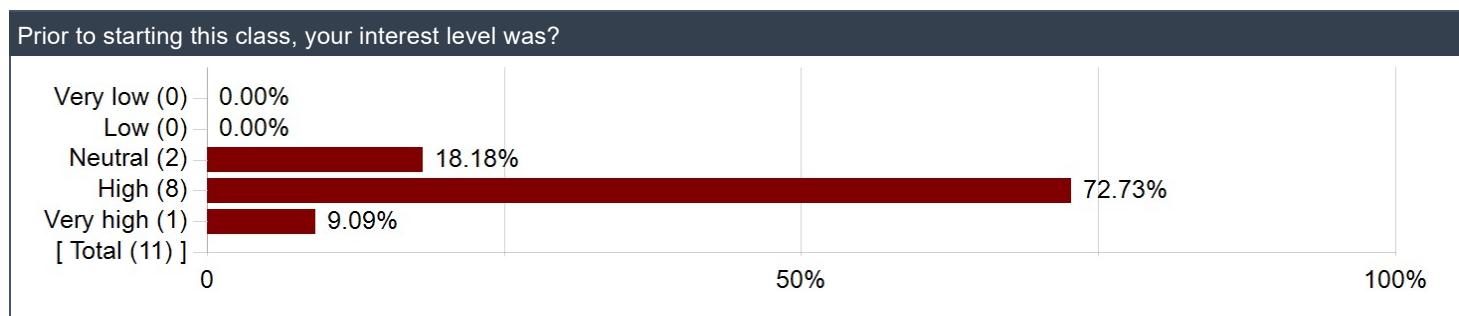
How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%	71.43%
Field Trips	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%	71.43%
Library Sessions	4.29	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	11.11%	44.44%	22.22%
Review Sessions	3.33	3.00	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%	57.14%
Writing Seminars	3.22	3.00	0.00%	33.33%	22.22%	33.33%	11.11%	0.00%

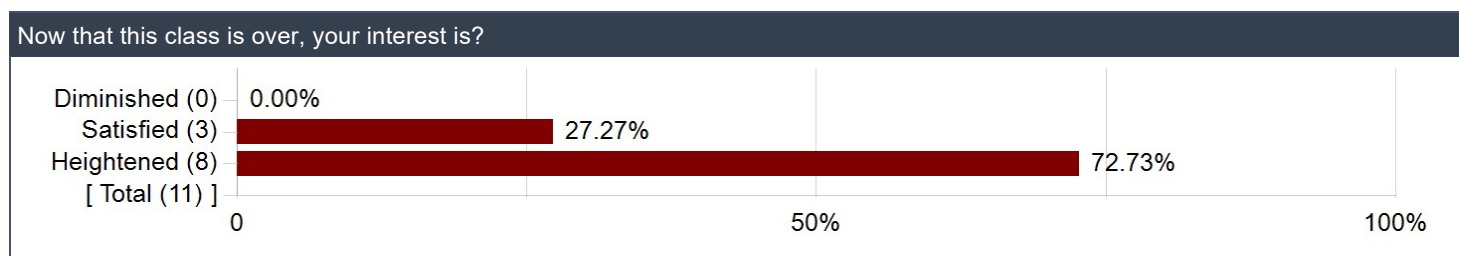
Is this class a requirement of some sort?



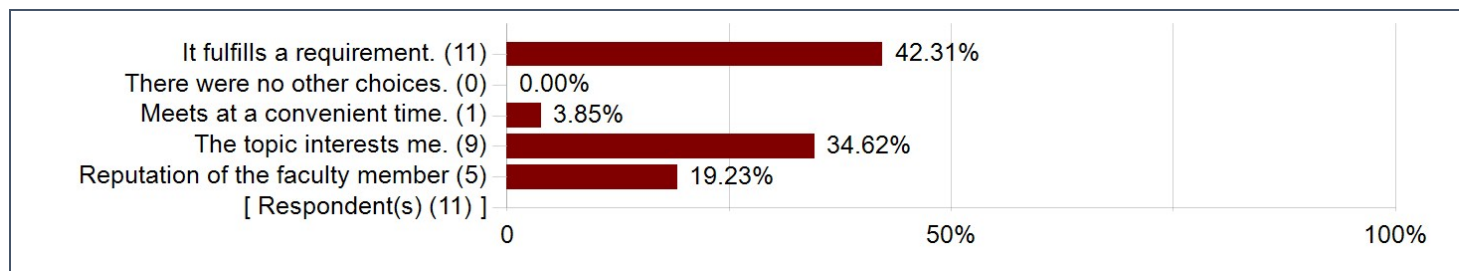
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



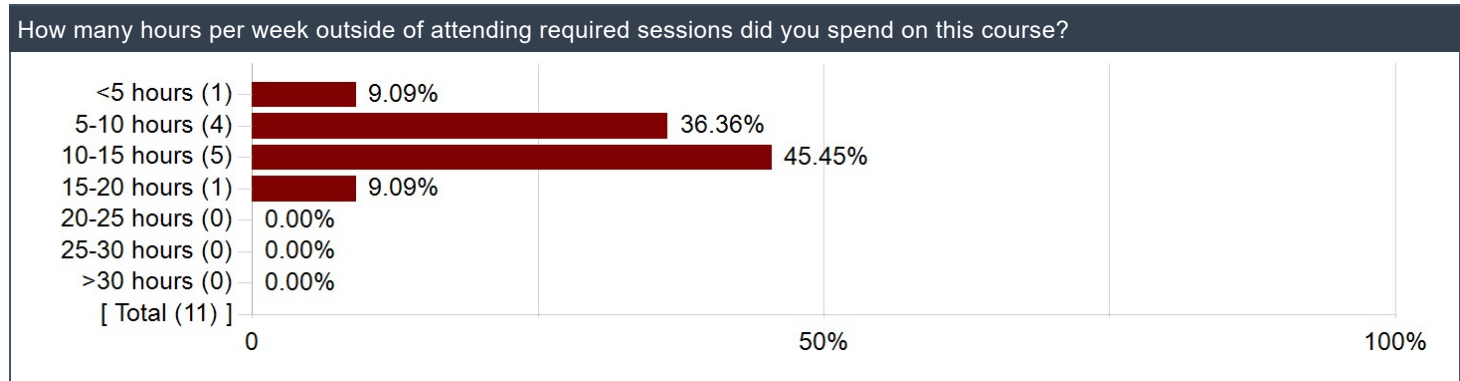
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



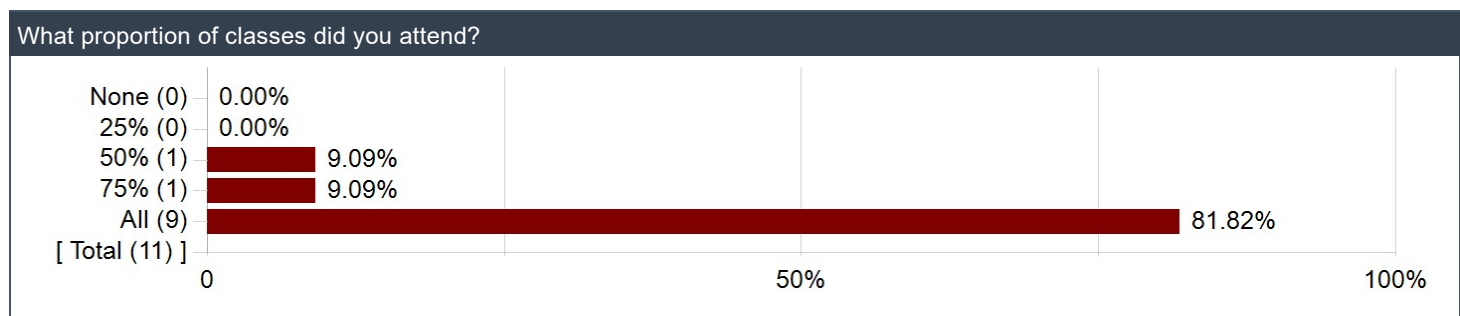
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



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 itself is pretty straightforward, there are just some challenging readings but nothing impossible.
In order to reach the expected level of depth of analysis, I needed to spend more time reading than I usually spent on other courses.
N/A
You really have to show a lot of interest and I think the discussion boards are a great way to do that and make interesting connections between different parts of the class.
This course, specifically Sparrow's section, is demanding. You will get a lot out of it if you keep up with the pace. But, even if you fall behind a little bit, just attend his office hours and he'll explain the concepts to you. Just show that you're engaged with the material and you're trying; it goes a long way in his eyes.
This class was challenging, though I don't have an incredible amount of experience in social sciences.
Quite a challenging course