Democracy and its Challenges in the United States
American Studies MA Program
Universitas Gadjah Mada
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Course Overview

The United States (US) has long been regarded as the paragon of modern democracy. It is the land where, according to Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America*, men found equality of condition and thus arguably have natural inclination toward democracy and political equality. As the leader of the liberal world order, the United States also takes pride in democracy promotion all over the globe. The ideas of equality, individual liberty, and the rule of law seem to be the keywords when discussing political life in the US. Only until recently that challenges to democracy in the US become more obvious and surprise observers unfamiliar with the sociopolitical dynamics of the country. Issues such as race relations, populism, extreme political polarization, and economic inequality have become more pronounced in recent years. These issues have also forced observers and political scientists alike to rethink the robustness of democracy in the US.

This graduate level seminar provides an introduction to the study of democracy and democratization with a special focus to the case of the United States. The concept of democracy in the study of democratization is introduced and is utilized as a framework to consider the political system of the US. Students are also exposed to a variety of issues related to the challenges to democracy in the US. These challenges manifest both in extreme political polarization as well as mobilization of new social forces into US democracy. As the political scientist Samuel Huntington once famously postulated: mobilization of new social forces into a political system needs to be balanced by the pace of its institutionalization. Otherwise, political decay will be the upcoming result. *As intended learning outcomes,* students should be able to (i) comprehend democracy as a political system, (ii) understanding theories explaining the sources of democracy and (iii) becoming familiar with the key issues challenging democracy in the United States. While the majority of the readings comes from the discipline of political science and sociology, no background training in either discipline is necessary to enroll in the course.

Class Policies and Expectations

This is an online, Zoom based, lecture and seminar. Students are expected to attend the Zoom meetings and participate in discussions. With a few exceptions, cellphones and other electronic devices are strongly discouraged.

The class is structured as a half lecture and half seminar. The instructor would lecture for the first 50 minutes and then would open a seminar discussion for the next 50 minutes. Every student is expected to participate actively in the discussion commenting on or asking about the reading materials of that particular week. Each student is expected to be polite and courteous

toward each other. It is important for the students to learn how to converse in a scholarly manner. A seminar experience goes a long way should they decide to pursue their PhD later.

Students may schedule Zoom office hours with the instructor should they need to discuss class materials. Office hours are typically 2 hours per week. Schedule your appointment early in the week to reserve your slot, in case there are several students making appointment at once.

Required Text

Weekly reading materials are distributed by the instructor through Google Classroom. Students do not need to make any purchase in regard of their readings. Students are expected, however, to read all the required readings of a particular week before they join the class. Reading load is typically more or less 50 to 100 pages per week.

Grading Policies

Your grades consist of four components: (i) weekly reading response, (ii) midterm take home exams, (iii) final essays of 8 to 10 pages, and (iv) attendance. The following table elaborate the grading policies.

No	Component	Weight	Due Date	Notes
1	Weekly response	40%	weekly	Students are expected to write 1 to 2 pages critical response/summary to their weekly readings. The response should be submitted before the meeting of each week.
2	Mid-term exam	25%	TBA	Students answer take home exam questions and should be returned in the same day.
3	Final essay	25%	TBA	Students should choose 1 out of 5 questions and write a long essay of approximately 8-10 pages discussing the question. This exam is modelled after US PhD comprehensive exam.
4	Attendance	10%	weekly	While the weight of attendance is only 10%, the students need to have 75% attendance rate to pass the course.

Each of the graded components of the course is on a 100-point scale and is weighted according to the percentages above. For instance, if you receive 100 points on your mid-term exam, it will count as 30 points (30%) toward your final score/grade. By the end of the course, you will receive a final score between 0 to 100 and it will translate into a letter grade. Letter grades for the course are based on the following final score ranges.

Grade	Score	Grade	Score
A	90+	C+	65-69
A-	85-89	C	60-64
B+	80-84	C-	55-59
B	75-79	D+	50-54
B-	70-74	D	below 50

Weekly Class Schedule and Reading Requirement

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Part I. Understanding Democracy

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Week 1 [date TBA]	**What is democracy? A conceptual introduction** 1. Rosseau, Jean-Jacques (2003), "The Social Contract," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 2-5. 2. Schumpeter, Joseph (2003), "Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 5-11. 3. Przeworski, Adam (2003), "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 12-18. 4. Diamond, Larry (2003), "Defining and Developing Democracy," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 29-39.
Week 2 [date TBA]	**Does democracy come or was it made? Sources of democracy** 1. Huber, Rueschemeyer, Stephens (2003), "The Impact of Economic Development on Democracy," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 71-75. 2. Huntington, Samuel (2003), "Democracy's Third Wave," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 93-98. 3. Lipset, Seymour Martin (2003), "Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 56-64.

	4. Przeworski, Adam et al (2003), "Economic Development and Political Regime," excerpt from Robert Dahl et al (eds), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 108-115.
Week 3 [date TBA]	**Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and the idea of American exceptionalism** 1. Tocqueville, Alexis (1841), "Introduction," in *Democracy in America Vol. 1*, Boston & Philadelphia: C.C. Little & J. Brown, pp. 1-17. 2. Tocqueville, Alexis (1841), "Chapter III: Social Conditions of the Anglo-Americans," in *Democracy in America Vol. 1*, Boston & Philadelphia: C.C. Little & J. Brown, pp. 47-56. 3. Kuangyu, Zhao (2016), "How Tocqueville Reveals America as Exceptional," in *The Images of Democracy: Tocqueville and American Exceptionalism,* unpublished MA thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Duke University, pp. 22-68.
Week 4 [date TBA]	**Separation of powers in the United States: the congress, the presidency, and the court** 1. Madison, James (1788), "Federalist No. 51," *The Federalist Papers*. 2. Wright Jr., Benjamin F (1933), "The Origins of the Separation of Powers in America," *Economica,* No. 40, pp. 169-185. 3. Swindler, Williams F. (1970), "The Supreme Court, the President and Congress," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 19(4), pp. 671-692. 4. Bellamy, Richard (1996), "The Political Form of the Constitution: The Separation of Powers, Rights, and Representative Democracy," *Political Studies*, XLIV, pp. 436-56.
Week 5 [date TBA]	**The wall of separation: secularism and democracy in the United States** 1. Bader, Veit (1999), "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?, *Political Theory* Vol. 27 (5), pp. 597-633. 2. Wallace, J. Clifford (2001), "The Framers' Establishment Clause: How High the Wall?, *BYU Law Review* Vol. 2001 (2), pp. 755-72. 3. Joppke, Christian (2017), "Beyond the Wall of Separation: Religion and the American State in Comparative Perspective," *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Vol. 14 (4), pp. 984-1008.
Week 6 [date TBA]	**Mid-term take home exam**

Part II. Challenges to Democracy in the US

Week 7 [date TBA]	**Political polarization in the United States: party politics and their ideology** 1. Silbey, Joel H. (2010), "American Political Parties: History, Voters, Critical Elections, and Party Systems," *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Group,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 97-120. 2. Brewer, Mark D (2010), "The Evolution and Alteration of American Party Coalitions," *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Group,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 121-142. 3. Green, John C (2010), "The Party Faithful: Religion and Party Politics in America," *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Group,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 143-164.
Week 8 [date TBA]	**Populism and the rise of Trump** 1. Mudde, Cas & Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), "What is Populism?" Ch.1 in *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-20. 2. Mudde, Cass & Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), "Populism and Democracy," Ch. 5 in *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79-96. 3. Pierson, Paul (2017), "American hybrid: the rise of Trump and the strange merger of populism and plutocracy," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 68 (1), pp. 106-121. Recommended: 4. Inglehart, Ronald & Pippa Norris (2016), "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," working paper, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, pp. 1-53.
Week 9 [date TBA]	**Black Lives Matter movement and race relations in the United States** 1. Hall, Jacqueline Dowd (2005), "The Long Civil Rights Movements and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91 (4), pp. 1233-1263. 2. Harris, Fredrick C (2015), "The Next Civil Rights Movements?" *Dissent*, Vol. 63 (5), pp. 34-40.

	3. Late et al (2020), "The Framing of Race: Trayvon Martin and the Black Lives Matter Movement, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 51 (8), pp. 790-812.
Week 10 [date TBA]	**The Occupy Wall Street: On economic inequality in the United States** 1. Gitlin, Todd (2013), "Occupy's predicament: the moment and prospect for the movement," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 64(1), pp. 3-25. 2. Calhoun, Craig (2013), "Occupy wall street in perspective," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 64(1), pp. 26-38. 3. Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2011), "The fight for 'real democracy' at the heart of Occupy Wall Street," *Foreign Affairs*, October 11, 2011, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-america/2011-10-11/fight-real-democracy-heart-occupy-wall-street. 4. Winters, Jeffrey & Benjamin Page (2009), "Oligarchy in the United States?", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7 (4), pp. 731-751.
Week 11 [date TBA]	**Exporting democracy abroad: on the US foreign policy** 1. Kegley, Charles & Margaret Hermann (2002), "In Pursuit of a Peaceful International System," in *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs Reality*, eds. Peter J. Schrader, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 15-30. 2. Johnson, Juliet (2002), "In Pursuit of Prosperous International System," in *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs Reality*, eds. Peter J. Schrader, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 31-54. 3. Hook, Stephen W (2002), "Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad," in *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs Reality*, eds. Peter J. Schrader, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 109-130.
Week 12 [date TBA]	**Group presentation + Final exam take home essay due**