

draft 211125

YHU3266 Democratic Theory

AY2021-22 SII

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Seminars Tu Fr 0900-1020 Y-GLRm2

Office hours Tu Fr 1030-1130 by appointment; sign up at [Calendly](#).

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Synopsis: Why is democracy valuable? What does it even mean to call a political order a democracy? How can democracy represent a 'will of the people' if the people disagree with one other? Does democracy conflict other important values and goals? In this course we answer these questions by first establishing a conceptual framework from the history of political thought, and then plunging into contemporary democratic theory. We will use theory to analyse contemporary local and international examples, and we will also be open to real examples posing challenges to theory.

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- conceptualise democracy
- normatively evaluate various conceptions of democracy
- apply these normative and conceptual tools to current affairs

Prerequisite(s): Modern Social Thought.

Majors: The course counts towards the PPE and the Philosophy majors. The course satisfies the following dimensions of the Philosophy major: Skills, Problems; Historical, New

Acknowledgements: This syllabus builds on courses by Arash Abizadeh, Patchen Markell, Alan Patten, Philip Pettit, and Erin Pineda.

Required texts

Required readings are all available electronically. Many readings are freely available on the internet, or via library ebooks; for these, I have provided direct links in the course schedule. The remainder are provided via library e-reserves.

Nonetheless, I encourage you to purchase the hard copy of the Rousseau:

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1988. *On the Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett.

And I encourage you to use the hard copies of the Aristotle, Mill, and Tocqueville, if you still own them from your common curriculum classes:

- Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. 2006. *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Mill, John Stuart. 2015. *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Assignments and assessments

Assessment for this course has four components.

1. Participation and citizenship (13%), including submission of 10 sets of reading questions over the semester, and a case presentation.
2. Concept quizzes (4 x 25 minute in-class exercises, 26%): Tue 25 Jan; Fri 11 Feb; Fri 1 Mar; Fri 25 Mar.
3. Scholarly essay (2500 words, 30%): 12 midnight Sun 13 Mar; scholarly essay draft (0.5%): 12 midnight Thu 10 Mar.
4. Opinion piece (1750 words, 30%): 12 midnight Fri 29 Apr; opinion piece draft (0.5%): 12 midnight Mon 11 Apr.

All four components of the course assessment must be completed in order to complete the course.

1. Participation and citizenship (13%)

You fulfill this component of the course assessment by (a) doing the readings; (b) submitting 'reading questions' for 10 seminars across the semester; (c) attending and participating in class; (d) doing a case presentation.

a. doing the readings

Do the readings in advance of class, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

For particularly dense readings, I may post some guidelines and pointers to assist and focus your preparation

b. reading questions

Submit reading question(s) to 10 separate seminars (which have reading assigned) over the semester, on the discussion thread for the relevant seminar. Questions are due at 8.30am on the day of the seminar; late submissions will not be read or credited. You are responsible for ensuring you complete the required 10 submissions by the end of semester.

Reading questions are questions or comments about the seminar's readings; this will give me an index of how you have received the materials and what we might need to focus on in class. Please feel free to ask either very basic questions, very sophisticated ones, or anything in between, according to how far along your thinking is in connection with the materials.

Only posts for seminars with assigned readings can count towards your required 10 submissions. (I will certainly read and respond to posts for seminars without new readings, they will just not count towards your 10).

c. attending and participating in class

In your class participation, I am looking for both *scholarship* and *citizenship*. Scholarship is the depth of understanding of course materials displayed in your class participation. But the course materials are difficult and controversial, so serious engagement, even if ultimately incorrect or misguided, is equally highly valued. Citizenship is the interpersonal aspect of your class participation. Seminar citizenship means making an effort to contribute in class, letting others speak and engaging constructively with their contributions, not playing with your phone, not whispering or having side-conversations while others are speaking, and then also the basics of attendance and punctuality.

It is also my job to provide a class atmosphere which includes everyone, recognising and supporting diverse modes of contribution.

d. case presentation (3%)

You will present an example or case relevant to the seminar's theory to the entire group during the second half of the course. You will have about 5 minutes of class time to explain

the case and how it exemplifies, challenges, or otherwise connects with the session's theory. You may use slides, but you are not required or expected to.

I will preassign you to a specific seminar. [\[link\]](#) If you wish to change the session when you present, you are free to swap with a classmate. Please update the role allocation listing accordingly.

2. Concept quizzes (4 x 25 minute in-class exercises, 26%): Tue 25 Jan; Fri 11 Feb; Fri 1 Mar; Fri 25 Mar

In the past, I have held a mid-term exam, with the intent of encouraging students to keep up with the topics across the entire course, so that students have the full range of conceptual tools at their disposal before writing their final paper. However, there are numerous downsides to exams, and they are not the best index of student learning.

Instead of an exam, we will have 4 x 25 minute in-class written exercises, held at the start of the teaching session. For each exercise, you will write a response to one prompt, from a choice of two. You will type your answer on your computer, and you will have access to your notes and books during the exercise. More details, and preparation guidance, to be released closer to the time.

3a. Scholarly essay (2000 words, 30%): 12 midnight Sun 13 Mar

Essay questions will be released via Canvas by Fri 18 Feb. I will circulate a 'writing tips' document for guidance with writing this paper, including citation guidelines.

3b. Scholarly essay draft (0.5%): 12 midnight Thu 10 Mar.

Please submit a full draft of your first paper, along with a one-page outline of your argument, by 12 midnight on Thu 10 Mar.

Drafting papers in advance of submission is the most powerful way to improve your writing. It also allows me to ensure that your papers are on the right track. The rationale for requiring the outline in addition to the full draft is that writing an outline forces you to clarify to yourself what your paper is attempting to achieve, and what it needs to do to get there.

Submit your draft via the draft submission boxes. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Drafts will be graded for effort/completion only, not for quality: F for late or non-submission; C for an incomplete, rough, or sketchy submission; A for a serious submission.

4a. Opinion piece (1750 words, 30%): 12 midnight Fri 29 Apr

Write an opinion piece that relates the content of this course to some contemporary situation or event. So for instance, you might analyse the structure of actually-existing democracy in a particular polity, and argue why it is or is not adequate. Or you might identify a conflict between the pursuit of democracy and some other important value. Or again, you might advance a proposal for a new democratic mechanism or institution.

This genre of writing should connect scholarly ideas to practical issues, and thereby make the ideas interesting and comprehensible to a serious but non-specialist audience. You may choose whatever example you like, but certainly, it would be a valuable contribution to public life in this country if you would reflect on issues in Singapore.

This course, along with my other course Contemporary Egalitarianism, has a beautiful pedagogical website, *Equality&Democracy* (<https://equalitydemocracy.commonsworld.yale-nus.edu.sg/>), generously funded through a grant from the Yale-NUS Centre for Teaching and Learning. The site is available, password protected, to students enrolled in the course as a resource. Prior to writing your own piece, please do read previous cohorts' efforts. If someone

has already written on a topic that interests you, you might like your opinion piece to continue the conversation. Do you agree or disagree with their analysis? Is there some new application or connection that should be considered? Is there a different frame for thinking about the issue? However, your opinion pieces are not required to respond to existing articles on the site; you may also strike out in a whole new direction.

For high-quality examples of the kind of reflection and debate we are trying to generate, you might like to look at *Boston Review* (<https://bostonreview.net/philosophy-religion/rob-reich-philanthropy-anti-democratic>). There are some differences of convention regarding citation in this form of writing compared to conventional academic writing. We will discuss these differences closer to the time. Nonetheless, if you are uncertain, a good rule of thumb is always to cite more rather than less.

Equality&Democracy was previously a public site. Unfortunately, due to FICA legislation, the legality of the site is now unclear, resulting in the change to password protected access. Unless I am unable to obtain legal clearance to make the site public again, we will not go through the process of publishing your work on the site.

4b. Opinion piece draft (0.5%): 12 midnight Mon 11 Apr

Please think of an idea for your final opinion piece to discuss in class on Tue 12 Apr.

Please submit a written draft by 12 midnight on Mon 11 Apr, in order to be able to workshop it in class on Tue 12 Apr. Submit your draft via the draft submission boxes. Late submissions will not be accepted. Drafts will be graded for effort/completion only, not for quality: F for late or non-submission; C for an incomplete, rough, or sketchy submission; A for a serious submission.

Course Policies

Technology

The serious pedagogical problems relating to technology in the classroom.

I would strongly encourage students to try to minimise their reliance on their laptops during class where possible. Consider bringing hard-copies of your readings, and notepaper to write on. When your laptop needs to be open, please shut down any sources of distraction (web browsers, messaging, email).

Communications

I will make announcements relating to readings, preparation, and assignments via the Canvas announcement function, and also via Canvas course emails. Please ensure you have configured your profile to receive these communications.

I will respond to email queries within one working day. Please restrict email queries to administrative or organisational questions; if you have a substantive issue you need to discuss, please make an appointment.

Lateness

Please note the following from the College Undergraduate Regulations (p29):

Students are expected to plan and manage their workloads, and to ensure they do not lose work through IT malfunction. Students are expected to submit work on or before the deadlines specified in the syllabi or as advised in class. Faculty members may penalise students for work submitted after a deadline in accord with their policy, which will be clearly stated on the course syllabus.

Accordingly, I don't excuse lateness when the cause is something predictable in advance (including technology failure).

For the two papers, late submissions will be accepted, but with a lateness penalty of one third of a letter grade for the each 24 hours late (or part thereof).

PLEASE NOTE: For the essay drafts, reading questions, and in-class tests, late submissions will not be accepted.

Attendance

Your attendance is expected at all seminars. Please contact me if you are unable to attend a given seminar.

Of course, absences for medical reasons or for personal emergencies are excused.

I will allow one unexcused absence, no questions asked, without any effect on your participation grade. Save it up to use wisely, whether to cover a fieldwork absence, or for whatever other personal reason you may have. It is your responsibility to catch up on the work you may miss. Any further unexcused absences will have an incremental effect on your participation grade.

Health and Wellness

If you are experiencing undue stress or feel you might benefit from private counselling, please contact the Yale-NUS Health and Wellness Centre). You may also wish to reach out to the Assistant Dean within your Residential College.

Academic Integrity

Acting with academic integrity requires that (a) students do their own work; (b) students not interfere with the work of others; (c) students accurately and honestly represent the content of their work; and (d) students properly attribute others' work.

Please familiarise yourself with College standards of academic integrity, and uphold them.

Resources are available at:

<http://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>

<https://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/avoiding-plagiarism/>

<https://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/citing-your-sources/>

If you are uncertain, please raise your concerns with me.

Alleged breaches of academic integrity will be referred to the College Committee on Integrity and Discipline.

Intellectual Property and Privacy

Our academic model encourages open and penetrating discussion of what can sometimes be challenging materials. Additionally, we seek to cultivate an intellectual space in which, as stated in the Faculty Statement on the Freedom of Expression, "there are no questions that cannot be asked, no answers that cannot be discussed and debated." This kind of intellectual exploration requires trust and privacy. Therefore, students may not record and/or distribute course discussions, lectures, lecture slides or handouts, readings, videos, or any course related materials without prior permission of the instructor. This includes audio recording, video, transcription, and photography. Lectures and seminars that are delivered in-person, online, or as a pre-recorded videos should never be recorded or distributed beyond the course for which it was intended. Any notes which a student takes for their own learning and retention should not be shared beyond the Yale-NUS community. Students are encouraged to reflect upon and share their own learning experiences and ideas in whatever forum they wish. However, they

should not share course content produced by their professors or their peers (e.g. a peer's essay, comments made in class, posts to a Canvas discussion thread) without prior permission through any channels including social media.

Violation of this policy is addressed in the student Code of Conduct and could result in disciplinary and/or legal consequences. As per Clause F2(a) of Policies Relating To Yale-NUS College Intellectual Property, copyright to an Authored Work shall be owned by the University Member who authored it. Authored Work could include syllabi, tests, examination scripts, study guides, lecture notes and teaching materials, including lectures recorded on audio and/or visual recordings.

Grade Appeals

If you are unsatisfied with a grade-assessment, you can submit the assignment to me, along with a two-page note explaining why you think a re-evaluation is justified. I will then re-evaluate the paper, but reserve the right to raise or lower the grade, and this second decision is final.

Course schedule

Part I: Classic Historical Frameworks

01A 11/1

Course intro: before the rise of democracy

readings:

- Aristotle *Politics*, 3.6-13, 3.18, 4.11-12.
 - PPT1 hardcopy [Carnes Lord translation] OR [ebook](#) [different edition]

01B 14/1

Republican democracy i

readings:

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761) *The Social Contract*, Books I and II.
 - Purchased hard copy [Donald A. Cress translation] OR [ebook](#) [different edition]

02A 18/1

Republican democracy ii

readings:

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761) *The Social Contract*, Books III.1-5, III.15, and IV.1-2.
 - Purchased hard copy [Donald A. Cress translation] OR [ebook](#) [different edition]
- Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes (1789) [What is the third estate](#), Ch 5.

02B 21/1

Liberal democracy

readings:

- Benjamin Constant (1815) [Principles of politics applicable to all governments](#), II.1-2.
- Benjamin Constant (1819) [The liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns](#)

optional readings:

- Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) 'Of the Omnipotence of the Majority in the United States and Its Effects', *Democracy in America*, I.2.7.
 - MST hard copy [George Lawrence translation] OR [ebook](#) [different edition]
 - NB There is some discrepancy in the numbering between versions: in the online version it is listed as Vol 2 Part 2 Ch 7, whereas in the hard copy it is Vol 1 Part 2 Ch 7 (pp246-61). Check the title of the section to be sure you are reading the correct part.

03A 25/1

Concept quiz 1

Utilitarian democracy

readings:

- James Mill (1825) [Essay on Government](#)

03B 28/1

Democratic minimalism

readings:

- Joseph Schumpeter (2008) [1942] *Capitalism, Socialism, Democracy*, New York: Harper Perennial, 250-283.

04A 1/2 Chinese New Year

Public Holiday, no class

Part II: Contemporary Debates

04B 4/2

Deliberative democracy i

readings:

- Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thomson (2004) [*Why Deliberative Democracy?*](#), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-29.
- John Rawls (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, Sections 2, 3, 9-11, 26.

optional readings:

- Jürgen Habermas (1994) 'Three normative models of democracy', *Constellations* 1 (1): 1-10.

05A 8/2

Deliberative democracy ii

readings:

- John Rawls (1997) 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited', *University of Chicago Law Review* 64 (3) (Summer 1997), 765-807.
 - You can leave out §5 (pp787-794).

05B 11/2

Concept quiz 2

Responses to deliberative democracy i

readings:

- Lynn Sanders (1997) 'Against Deliberation', *Political Theory*, 25 (3), 347-376.

06A 15/2

Responses to deliberative democracy ii

readings:

- Chantal Mouffe (2000) '[Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism](#)', Institute for Advanced Study, Vienna: Political Science Series, 72.

06B 18/2

Responses to deliberative democracy iii

readings:

- Sungmoon Kim (2015) 'Public Reason Confucianism: A Construction', *American Political Science Review* 109 (1), 187-200.
- Lily Zubaidah Rahim (2013) 'Introduction: The Spirit of Wasatiyyah Democracy', in Rahim (ed.) *Muslim Secular Democracy: Voices from Within*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-27.

RECESS WEEK

07A 1/3

Concept quiz 3

Representation i

readings:

- Edmund Burke (1774) [*Speech to the electors of Bristol*](#)
- Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967) *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 209-40.

07B 4/3

Representation ii

readings:

- Jane Mansbridge (1999) 'Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"', *Journal of Politics* 61 (3), 628-657.

08A 8/3

Representation iii

readings:

- Philip Pettit (2000) 'Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory', in Shapiro and Macedo (eds.) *Designing Democratic Institutions: Nomos XLII*, New York: NYU Press, 105-144.
- Philip Pettit (2004) '[Depoliticizing Democracy](#)', *Ratio Juris* 17(1) (March 2004), 52-65.

[Scholarly paper draft due, 10/3]

08B 11/3

Representation iv

readings:

- JS Mill (1861) *Considerations On Representative Government*, Chapter 8
 - PPT2 hard copy (in the *On Liberty and other essays* volume) OR [ebook](#) [different pagination]
- Daniel Bell (2015) *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 151-178.

optional readings:

- Daniel Bell and Chenyang Li (eds) (2013) [*The East Asian Challenge for Democracy: Political Meritocracy in Comparative Perspective*](#), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapters 2 and 5.
- Bell and Pettit made their disagreements explicit in an event at Yale-NUS College in 2015. Watch [here](#).

[Scholarly paper due, 13/3]

09A 15/3

Electoral systems

readings:

- Robert A. Dahl (2000) *On Democracy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 130-141, 189-195.
- Pippa Norris (1997) 'Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems', *International Political Science Review* 18(3), 297–312.

09B 18/3

Civil society

readings:

- Iris Marion Young (1999), 'State, Civil Society, and Social Justice', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Calderon-Hacker (eds.), *Democracy's Value*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 141-162.
- Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) *Democracy in America*, II.2.5-7, II.2.20 and II.4.6-7.
 - MST hard copy [George Lawrence translation] OR [ebook](#) [different edition]
 - NB There is some discrepancy in the numbering between versions: in the online version the selections are listed as Vol 3 Part 2 Ch 5-7 and 20 and Vol 4 Part 4 Ch 6-7, whereas in the hard copy they are Vol 2 Part 2 Ch 5-7 and 20 (pp513-24, 555-558) and Vol 2 Part 4 Ch 6-7 (pp690-702).
- Rob Reich (2016) 'Repugnant to the Whole Idea of Democracy? On the Role of Foundations in Democratic Societies', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 49, 466-471.

10A 22/3

Singaporean democracy i

readings:

- Lee Kuan Yew (2011) *Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going*, Singapore: Straits Times Press, 49-90.
- Beng-Huat Chua (1995) [Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore](#), London: Routledge, 184-202 (Chapter 9).

further resources:

- [Academia.sg](#) is an excellent resource for tracking down academic work about Singapore, including subcategories about Singaporean government and civil society.
- [CAPE](#) issues statements, brings together press, and creates explainers on issues of public importance in Singapore. It also offers a [reading list](#) for an informed citizenry.
- Lily Zubaidah Rahim & Michael D. Barr (2019) [The Limits of Authoritarian Governance in Singapore's Developmental State](#), Palgrave MacMillan.

10B 25/3

Concept quiz 4

Singaporean democracy ii

readings:

- Cherian George (2012) [Freedom from the press](#), Singapore: NUS Press, 93-116.
- Chee Soon Juan (2012) *Democratically Speaking*, Singapore: Chee Soon Juan, 87-103.

optional readings:

- Cherian George (2017) *Singapore, Incomplete*, Singapore: Woodville News, 66-79.
 - The whole text is available as hard copy at the library; selections via ereserve. Many of George's essays also appear on his blog Air Conditioned Nation, including a back-and-forth exchange with a PAP representative in the Straits Times on the topic of [calibrated coercion](#).

- Chee Soon Juan (2012) *Democratically Speaking*, Singapore: Chee Soon Juan, 104-119.
 - The whole text is available as hard copy at the library; selections via ereserve

Part III: Rejuvenating Democracy

11A 29/3

Compulsory voting

readings:

- Annabelle Lever (2010) 'Compulsory Voting: A Critical Perspective', *British Journal of Political Science* 40 (4), 897-915.
- Lisa Hill (2010) 'On the Justifiability of Compulsory Voting: Reply to Lever', *British Journal of Political Science* 40 (4), 917-923.

optional reading:

- Annabelle Lever (2010) 'Democracy and Voting: A Response to Lisa Hill', *British Journal of Political Science* 40 (4), 925-929.

11B 1/4

Workplace democracy

readings:

- Carole Pateman (1970) *Participation and democratic theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13-14 [starting 'A theory of democracy ...' to 'minimum input (participation) on their part.'], 22-50, 67-71, 98-100.
- Tom Malleson (2013) 'Making the Case for Workplace Democracy: Exit and Voice as Mechanisms of Freedom in Social Life', *Polity* 45 (4), 604-629.

optional readings:

- Elizabeth Anderson (2017) *Private Government*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 37-71.
- Hélène Landemore and Isabelle Ferreras (2016) 'In Defense of Workplace Democracy: Towards a Justification of the Firm–State Analogy', *Political Theory* 44 (1), 53–81.

12A 5/4

Ready to discuss idea for opinion piece.

Deepening democracy

readings:

- James S. Fishkin (2011) *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-31 (Chapter 1).
- Michael K. MacKenzie (2016) 'A General-Purpose, Randomly Selected Chamber', in Iñigo González-Ricoy and Axel Gosseries (eds.) *Institutions for Future Generations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 282-294 (Chapter 17).

supplementary readings:

- Other chapters in *Institutions for Future Generations*. Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of various institutional proposals in the literature.

- Hélène Landemore (2017) 'Deliberative Democracy as Open, Not (Just) Representative Democracy', *Daedalus* 146 (3), 51-63. [about new forms of democratic participation]
- Fabio Wolkenstein (2019) 'Agents of Popular Sovereignty', *Political Theory* 47 (3), 338-362. [about political parties]

12B 8/4

[Opinion piece draft due, 11/4]

Militant democracy

readings:

- Alexander Kirschner (2010) 'Proceduralism and Popular Threats to Democracy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18 (4), 405-424.

13A 12/4

Workshopping opinion piece drafts

13B 12/4 Good Friday

Public Holiday, no class

[Opinion piece due, 29/4]