History 350: Democracy as a Way of Life

Dr. Richard Schneirov

Democracy as a Way of Life

Course Description: Democracy—a voluntary, self-governing association of equals—has spread throughout the contemporary world. But, the United States is the only major country whose history and identity is virtually indistinguishable from the idea and practice of democracy. This course is designed to acquaint students with a more complex, sophisticated, and multi-dimensional understanding of *American* democracy than is prevalent. In this course, democracy defines not only America’s government and politics, but also its society. The course divides democracy into three dimensions, which correspond in large measure to three periods in American history. In phase one, from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries democracy took over from monarchy and progressively reshaped government, politics, and policymaking; in phase two, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, democracy penetrated the modern capitalist economy and society and reshaped it in the interests of workers and consumers; and in phase three, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, democracy began to mold the patterns of personal life previously determined by the patriarchal family giving rise to alternative identities and lifestyles. Most recently, democracy has begun to encompass human responsibility for the earth and its environment. Throughout the course, the emphasis is on the most dynamic elements of democracy: civil society, public opinion, and social movements.

American democracy, like democracy in general, must be seen as a potential and a trend capable of being stymied and reversed as well as unleashed and accelerated. It has always existed in degrees rather than in an all or nothing state. In this sense, the United States is only partially democratic. At all times, democratic and anti-democratic forces have contended with each other. Thus, one of the major purposes of this course is to acquaint students with the conflicts and debates within American history over the extension and deepening of democracy and the times in which democracy has been gone backwards as well as forwards.

Foundational Studies:

**This course satisfies ISU’s Foundational Studies requirement for Upper Division Integrative Electives**

Specific learning outcomes of Foundational Studies courses [referred to as **FSO 1-10** throughout the syllabus] include:

1.      Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems;

2.      Critically evaluate the ideas of others;

3. Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of

knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities,

mathematics, and history);

4.      Demonstrate an appreciation of human expression through literature and fine

and performing arts;

5.      Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship;

6.      Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies;

7.      Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global,

cultural, and historical context;

8.      Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and

actions;

9.      Apply principles of physical and emotional health to wellness;

10.  Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and

in writing.

The Foundational Studies program is also designed to meet specific learning objectives [referred to as **LO 1-3**] and to build skills for applied learning. [These Skills and Applied Learning Objectives are referred to as **SALR 1-5**.]

### Learning objectives:

1. Use a thematic approach to a particular topic or issue that integrates multiple ways of knowing;

[In Democracy as a Way of Life students will call on ways of knowing from history, the social and behavioral sciences (particularly sociology, political science, and economics), and literature, in particular, but also integrate some perspectives from the natural sciences in our discussions and study of the environment as an issue in democracy]

1. Engage in a project or conduct research that makes use of multiple ways of knowing to address a particular topic or issue;

[students work individually and in groups on papers and projects that integrate material from the course; students also engage the community with their group project that focuses on Terre Haute or ISU]

1. Analyze and write at an advanced level.

[students write multiple take-home exams and papers and read sophisticated, varied material that comes from scholars working in a variety of disciplines]

### Skill applied learning requirements:

1. Explicitly demonstrate how the curriculum will develop critical thinking skills
2. Explicitly demonstrate how the curriculum will develop information literacy skills
3. Include a graded writing component, which whenever possible is developmental
4. Must incorporate opportunities for students to critically read and analyze sophisticated, complex text, and to write intensively.
5. Must include assignments that apply information from within and across various "ways of knowing"

Required Books: Gaston Fernandez and Richard Schneirov, Democracy as a Way of Life; Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom; Michael Schudson, The Good Citizen.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Course Requirements: There will be **no exams** in this class; that also means no final exam.[[2]](#footnote-2) Instead, students will complete two (2) take-home exams; and two short papers. One paper is based on one of the eight class debate topics. At the start of the semester each student will choose a debate topic and a side and will make a persuasive, evidence-based class presentation. The other paper is based on a group assignment in which you will choose one of democracy’s four dimensions and with help from other group members describe, analyze, and critique its manifestation at Indiana State University (or your own community), and offer democratic alternatives (to be explained further in class). ). This major project will involve taking an historical perspective, the use of one or more key social science concepts (civil society, the workings of the market, etc.), an understanding of the individual’s social responsibility to the community and vice versa, and depending on the issue, may require a student to bring in cultural diversity and a global perspective. As one example, students might compare the evolution of a civil society, or the idea of a civil society, in the United States and India.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Grading: Each exam is worth 30% of the final grade. The paper is worth 15% of the grade, and the special report is worth 20%. There will also be four or five in-class or take-home short quizzes, each worth one to two points, based on the discussion readings. **You may use your notes during a quiz**. Altogether, the quizzes will be worth 5% of the grade. A possible quiz is indicated on the schedule below where the word "discuss" appears. To figure out your final grade multiply your numerical score on the two take-home exams and debate paper by the weight (.3 and .2) and the add the point total for the collective action paper plus quiz points. Finally, add or subtract attendance points.

Grading Scale: A=93-100%; A-=90-92; B+=87-89%; B=83-86%; B-= 80-82; C+=77-79%; C=73-76%; C-=70-72; D+=67-69%; D=63-66%; D-=60-62; F=59% and below.

Attendance Policy and Class Participation: Because the papers are based primarily on the lectures and the readings, which we discuss in class, attendance and participation are extremely important in this course. Participating in the form of asking and answering questions and making comments will help engage, focus, and maintain your attention and facilitate learning for you and others. By the way**, I welcome all opinions and especially encourage students to disagree or question my conclusions**.

Regular attendance is critical to doing well in this course. The lectures will greatly aid you in interpreting the basic themes of the course in a way you cannot get from simply reading the texts. Moreover, the discussions will help you clarify the readings, many of which are quite difficult. Attendance will affect the final grade according to the following scale: 0-2 absences: 1 point extra credit on the final grade; 3-4 absences: no change; 5-6 absences: 1 point subtracted; 7 absences: 2 points subtracted; 8 absences 3 points subtracted; and so on. Two times tardy equal one absence. **Thirteen or more absences will result in failing the course**. Because you are allowed four absences without losing any points on your final grade, I do not accept any excuses for missing class, legitimate as they may be; if you are not in class, you will simply be marked absent. DO NOT BRING ME NOTES TO EXCUSE ABSENCES. I will deal with extended absences due to severe illness or injury on a case-by-case basis.

Important Class Rules and Suggestions:

--*Plagiarism*: borrowing sentences or **even phrases** from the text, the internet, or from another student without quotes and citation is against university rules and will not be tolerated in the class. See the statement on academic dishonesty at: <<http://web.indstate.edu/sjp/docs/code.pdf>>.

--*Laptop use* is not required or permitted in this class except with my permission.

--*Writing Standards*: Writing (grammar, spelling, organization, clarity, style, etc.) is an important part of your grade. It is your responsibility to make sure that all papers you turn in meet minimal writing standards; please take advantage of the Writing Center, Root Hall, A-274, phone 3274; the Center is not just for remedial work; it is also for those who desire to excel in their writing.

-- *Late Papers:* Papers may be turned in during class or may be deposited in my mailbox in the history office as late as 4:30. Late papers will be accepted but with a penalty of one point per day, including weekends. After one week please see me if you still have not turned in a paper. **If you have not done your paper on time,** **don't compound the problem by missing class that day**;

--*Class Decorum:* Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices before coming to class. If you have to leave class early, please sit close to the back door so that you don’t disturb the class as you leave.

--*Make Copies of Papers*: Please make copies of all papers you turn in and keep returned papers in your possession until you receive your final grade.

--*Disabilities:* Students who have physical or learning disabilities and need special accommodation should register with Disabled Student Services located on the second floor of Gillum Hall.

Academic Freedom: According to the American Association of University Professors, “Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject; college and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. . . [T]hey should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-11:30 or by appointment. My office is in Stalker Hall, 308; phone, 2719. I enjoy talking to students about their progress in the course or about anything brought up by the course, so please drop by or email me at: **Richard.Schneirov@indstate.edu**. I will respond to all messages.

**Lecture, Reading, and Discussion Schedule**:

Note: Assignments listed below are to be read the day **before** class

Aug. 27: Introduction to Class: Lecture and Discussion “What is Democracy?” This first class introduces the interdisciplinary nature of the course incorporating multiple ways of knowing (economics and political culture (social sciences), cultural analysis (literature), historical studies, and communication) and the need to develop critical thinking skills in writing and in group projects. **[LO-1; SALR-1,5]**

Sept. 1: Lecture: The American Revolution from the Bottom-Up; video—“Tea Party Etiquette” (read: Fernandez and Schneirov: Democracy as a Way of Life, chap. 1; Schudson, chap. 1) This lecture and video is based on the new historiography that views the American people as taking a decisive role in the revolution through a bottom-up social movement. The tea party video highlights democratic participation across class lines. **[LO-1; SALR-1, 5]**

Sept. 3: Lecture: The American Revolution and the War for Independence (read: Foner, chap. 1).

Sept. 8: The State and US Constitutions: Origins and Structure (Schudson, chap. 2; Madison, Federalist No. 10). We will analyze the major features of the Constitution and discuss the democratic and anti-democratic features. In class we will discuss Madison’s famous Federalist No. 10 paper. The lecture and discussion applies economic analysis to the political issues. It also puts the American Revolution in an international perspective by comparing it to the states that were developed in Western Europe and in modernizing nations today. **[LO-1-3; SALR-1, 4, 5]**

Sept. 10: Constitution Making continued (Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 2); *Debate: The US Constitution: Democratic or Conservative?* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Sept. 15: Civil Society and Public Opinion (Skocpol, “Understanding America’s Civic Democracy” and “How The US Became a Civic Nation” on e-reserve) This important class introduces students to the political science concept of civil society and develops its importance in a historical and international context (the lack of a civil society is the reason so many democracies fail in the contemporary world). The lectures will also discuss why the lack of a vibrant civil society can undermine a procedural democracy. **[LO 1, 3; SALR 1, 4, 5]**

Sept. 17: Jacksonian Democracy (Foner, chap. 3: Schudson, chap. 3).

Sept. 22: Democratic Issues During the Civil War and Reconstruction (Eric Foner, chaps 2, 4, 5).

Sept. 24: Lincoln and Democracy (McPherson, Lincoln and the Second American Revolution, chaps. 3 and 7 on e-reserve). The two concepts of nationalism afford students an important perspective in today’s global affairs: the shift to a civic nationalism is necessary for cultural diversity. *Debate: North vs. South: Different Versions of Democracy?* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Sept. 29: The Rise of the Labor Movement (Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 4). *Debate: Unions: Democratic or Tyrannical?* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Oct. 1: Visit to Debs House; Lecture: The Pullman Strike, the New Liberalism and the Dysfunctional Market (read: Schneirov, “To the Ragged Edge of Anarchy” online at: <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/progressive/schneirov.html> and Foner, chap. 8).

Oct. 6: The Corporation and the Mix of Capitalism and Socialism (read: Sklar, “Capitalism and Socialism” on e-reserve)

Oct. 8: From Possessive to Social Individualism (read: Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 3).

Oct. 13: The Rise of the Regulatory State (read: Foner, “Progressive Freedom”).

Oct. 15: The New Progressive Era Citizenship (read: Schudson, chap. 4: “The Second Transformation of American Citizenship”). *Debate: Is the Citizen Sovereign in American Democracy, Yes or No.* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Oct. 20: Economic Democracy during the New Deal (Foner, chap. 9.

Oct. 22: American Foreign Policy in the Modern Era (Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 5) This class is based on a chapter surveying and interpreting the major shifts and enduring themes in US foreign policy from the War of 1812 to policy of globalization. In the course of its discussion of the common theme of open markets, students are challenged to confront the ambiguous motivations and causes behind US actions abroad. **[LO 1, 3; SALR 1, 4, 5]**

Oct. 27: Democracy v. Totalitarianism in WWII and the Cold War (read: Foner, Chaps. 10, 11). The spread of democracy worldwide is an important issue worldwide and raises the issue of whether advocating its spread is a violation of cultural diversity. *Debate: Are US Foreign Policy Motivations Democratic or Imperialistic?* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Oct., 29: The Civil Rights Movement and the Origins of a Social Movement Society; video: “Ain’t Scared of Your Jails.” (read: King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”).

Nov. 3: The Civil Rights Movement and the Great Society. The issue of civil rights relating to blacks returns to the issue of civic nationalism and ability of different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups to share a common space. The War on Poverty also raises the question of a society’s ethical responsibility to care for all of its citizens. (Foner, 275-99).

Nov. 5: The New Citizenship: The Rights Revolution (Foner, 299-305; Schudson, chap. 6). This class begins with a lecture on the shift in American democracy beginning with the 1965 Griswold decision from social policy to social rights legislated by the Congress and interpreted by the judicial system. The assigned Schudson chapter lays out the pros and cons of this historic shift and contrasts two different ethical positions. *Debate: Affirmative Action: Pro or Con.* **[FSO 1-3, 5, 6- 8, 10; LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Nov. 10: The Decline of the Patriarchal Family and the Rise of Feminism (read: Foner, 81-84; 194-96; Evans, chap. 1 on e-reserve).

Nov. 12: The Women’s Liberation Movement; “The Personal is the Political”; Students Give Oral Presentations (read: “The Politics of Housework”; “Rape, The All-American Crime”; Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name”; “SNCC Position Paper”; “No More Miss America”; “Consciousness Raising”; Koedt, “Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”). *Debate: Is Feminism Anti-Male?* Students are divided into groups and each group examines a well-known document from the women’s liberation movement—some have to be accessed online (information literacy). They are asked to give an oral presentation to the class and turn in a two-page take-home quiz: a) summarizing the document; b) giving the historical context of the document; and c) evaluating the document. After each five-minute presentation, students are encouraged to ask critical questions of the presenters. This takes the entire class period. **[FSO 1-4, 7; LO 1-3; SALR 1, 2, 5**]

Nov. 17: Norms and Cultural Radicalism: The New Expressive Individualism. Questioning norms brings up a key ethical issue. If norms are necessary, how can we honor them without oppressing those whose identities and behaviors lie outside them. (read: Emerson, “Self-Reliance” and Whitman “Song of Myself”--online).

Nov. 19: Expressive Individualism in Contemporary Lifestyles; the gay/transgender/bi-sexual/queer example.

Nov. 24: The Neo-Liberal Era: A Setback for Democracy? (read: Foner, chap. 13). Group Project Paper Due.

Dec. 1: The Neo-Liberal Era as Stalemate (read: Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 6; Gilder, Wealth and Poverty, excerpts);

Dec. 3: *Debate: Liberalism v. Conservatism in the shadow of democracy.* **[LO-1, 3; SALR-1-5]**

Dec. 8: The Environment: Democracy’s Fourth Dimension. Chapter 7 and this debate question puts the issue in global perspective and raises the question of how to evaluate information in the media.

(read: Fernandez and Schneirov, chap. 7).

Dec. 10: Summing Up.

1. . The three assigned books model different ways of knowing across the disciplines and compel students to confront alternative meanings of democracy, freedom, and citizenship. Democracy as a Way of Life is written by an historian and political scientist. Its premise is that democracy extends beyond the sphere of politics and government to the economy, society, culture, and the environment. The Story of Freedom, by the renowned historian Eric Foner, develops the thesis that the meaning of freedom in American history has always been contested and has changed over time. Michael Schudson, author of The Good Citizen, is a communications professor. The book examines how the concept of the good citizen has changed over time and the different controversies that Americans have had over the meaning of citizenship.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . Because I have found that in-class essay exams foster cramming and rote memorization, I have students write two extended take-home exams in which they have at least a week to think through and write three 3-5 page essays. The assignment is intended not just for evaluation, but as a learning experience in itself. Exam questions are intended to develop critical thinking, application of key concepts to historical facts, assessing and deploying evidence to construct an argument for a point of view. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . The above paper assignments encourage students to apply knowledge from different disciplines and use different ways of knowing. In the debate assignment students will have to use and cite internet sources. The group assignment asks students to apply knowledge creatively, engage with the immediate community, develop critical thinking skills, and use information literacy. **LO, 2** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)