COURSE OUTLINE

POT 6007 0001 (14808)
Graduate Seminar in Political Theory
Spring 2026

School of Politics, Security and International Affairs
College of Sciences, University of Central Florida

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Marien. Contact via Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu or course email.

Class time: Tuesdays, 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm.
Class location: POLI SCI Conference room (HPH 305 G)

INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE HOURS: Howard Philips Hall, room 311H
(from 1/13/26 to 4/23/26, otherwise online by appointment).

Tuesdays from 3 pm to 6 pm
Thursdays from 3 pm to 6 pm.

Or by special appointments setup via email. I am flexible. Do not skip class or work to make an appointment for consultation. Appointments on weekends are possible as well. If you cannot show up at an appointment, please email me ahead of time to re-schedule.

I. Course Description

Everyone likes democracy, at least as an ill-defined ideal. But what, exactly, is democracy? How is it evolving? And why should we value it?

Today democracy as a form of political rule is under stress. Some countries recently in transition to democratic governance are now reversing direction and evolving toward authoritarian governance. More established democracies are also showing signs of democratic exhaustion.

This seminar in political philosophy will examine the history and sources of pressures on democracy. It will also examine a range of philosophical arguments about democracy. Why and how should we value democracy? Should we value democracy as the only procedure for decision-making treating people as free and

equal? Or should we value democracy because it tends, on average and over time, to deliver the best decisions? Or should we value democracy because it delivers popular self-government? Or, again, should we value democracy because it "merely" channels conflict and mitigates violence? Or, more pointedly, should we value democracy at all?

II. Books to Buy and Other Materials We Will Consult

You will need to have ready access to these books and media sources:

Jason Brennan and Helene Landemore, *Debating Democracy: Do We Need More or Less?* Oxford University Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-19-754082-4

Simone Chambers, *Contemporary Democratic Theory*
Polity, 2024, ISBN: 978-1-5095-4340-3.

Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*
Oxford University Press, 2022, ISBN: 978-0-19-751964-6.

Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*. Norton, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-393-35742-4

Charles Tilly, *Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-521-70153-2.

Students must also have a subscription to the *New York Times*. (A digital subscription is affordable and will suffice for our purposes.) Throughout the semester, I will assign current and past articles to illustrate various aspects of democratization and democratization across the world.

Occasionally additional materials will be made available through the library reserve.

III. Basic Course Expectations

Students are expected to: (1) always have a working connection to the internet; (2) to promptly procure the textbooks; (3) to attend class regularly and refrain from engaging in distracting behavior (cell phone, etc.); (4) take quizzes and submit assignments in due time in normal circumstances; (5) to respect the rules of academic honesty, in particular never to present text not their own as their own wording. (6) In most cases to paraphrase contents from the textbook rather than use direct quotes. (7) Avoid using Artificial Intelligence in the composition of submissions.

IV. Student Learning Outcomes

LO-1: At the end of this semester, students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the conceptual distinctions between liberal democracy, illiberal democracy, social democracy, and popular democracy

LO-2: At the end of this semester, students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the pressures on democratic governance as conceptualized by Suzanne Mettler and Robert Lieberman: namely political polarization, economic inequality, conflict over who belongs and on what terms, and executive aggrandizement.

LO-3: At the end of this semester, students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the key processes of democratization and de-democratization as conceptualized by Charles Tilly: namely integration (or segregation) of interpersonal trust networks into (or from) public policy, insulation or insertion of major categorical inequalities into public politics, decrease or increase in the autonomy of major power centers.

LO-4: At the end of this semester, students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy key changes in the scope and depth of American democracy as described by historians Jill Lepore and Gary Gerstle.

LO-5: At the end of this semester, students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy a broad range of normative arguments about the value and limitations of democracy, namely democratic realism, epistemic democracy, deliberative democracy, and participative democracy.

LO-6: At the end of this semester, students will have demonstrated an effective ability to communicate in writing and orally with class participants about issues in the study of democracy.

LO-7: At the end of this semester, students will have demonstrated an effective ability to accurately synthesize and critically reflect on the assigned materials through the composition of a capstone essay.

V. Assessment Overview

Assessment Overview

WHAT Description	WHEN Deadlines	WORTH Full Course Points	WHY Purpose
Before Course Perception of Democracy's condition, value, potential for betterment	**Friday 1/16, 11:59pm** Upload a file in Webcourses.	**2**	**QUICK MONEY** To free up your financial aid.
Five Bi-weekly Quizzes In Webcourses	**Sunday Evenings**	**48**	**UNDERSTANDING** Demonstrate mastery of assigned materials with multiple choice questions.
Ten Weekly Discussion Posts In Yellow Dig	**Sunday Evenings**	**20**	**EVALUATION** of the readings.
Seminar Leadership and General Participation	**Tuesday Evenings**	**10**	Present reading and lead seminar discussion; raise interesting points about the readings and relevant political issues.
Draft Capstone Essay	**Dates vary**	**10**	**SYNTHESIS** To foster reflection on what was learned and to communicate this to the instructor.

Final Capstone Essay on Democracy's Condition and Value	**Wednesday, 4/29**	**10**	**SYNTHESIS** To foster reflection on what was learned and to communicate this to the instructor
TOTAL		**100**	See the Grading Scale below.

Grading Scale (%)	
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
70-76	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Number scores will not be rounded up.

VII. Course Prerequisites

VIII. Course Credits

3 credits

IX. Course Schedule

Updates may adjust the schedule below. Updates would be stated in the description of the new module (Part A in Webcourses).

Introduction: One Week

Week 1: Meeting on Tuesday 1/13

No readings assigned

Presentation of course themes, goals, and means.

Quiz Period 1

Week 2: Meeting on Tuesday 1/20

Read:

What is Democracy?
Selections in Library Reserve:
Ball et al, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, ch. 2: **Seminar leader: TBA**
Mettler and Liberman, *Four Threats*, Intro + ch. 1 **Seminar Leader: TBA**

The Struggle for Democracy in America
Lepore, Introduction and Part One (chapters 1-4) **Seminar Leader: TBA**

QUIZ SUNDAY 1/25 on Weeks 2 and 3 assigned materials

Week 3: Meeting on Tuesday 1/27

Read:

Chambers, chapters 1-2. **Seminar Leader: TBA**
Brennan, Introduction and Part 1 (chapters 1-4): **Seminar Leader: TBA**

Quiz Period 2

Week 4: Meeting on Tuesday 2/3

Read:

Lepore, ch. 5-6.
Chambers, ch. 3
Tilly, Preface and ch. 1-2

QUIZ SUNDAY 2/8 on Weeks 4 and 5 assigned materials

Week 5: Meeting on Tuesday 2/10

Read:

Lepore, ch. 7-8.
Chambers, ch. 4
Tilly, Preface and ch. 3

Quiz Period 3

Week 6: Meeting on Tuesday 2/17

Read:

Lepore, ch. 9-10
Chambers, ch. 5-6
Tilly, Preface and ch. 4

QUIZ SUNDAY 2/22 on Weeks 6 and 7 assigned materials

Week 7: Meeting on Tuesday 2/24

Read:

Lepore, ch. 11-12 and Epilogue.
Tilly, ch.5
NYT on India (in reserve)

Quiz Period 4

Week 8: Meeting on Tuesday 3/3

Read:

Gerstle, Introduction and ch. 1-2
Chambers, ch. 7
Landemore, ch. 5-8

QUIZ SUNDAY 3/8 on Weeks 8 and 9 assigned materials

Week 9: Meeting on Tuesday 3/10

Read:

Gerstle, ch. 3-4
Chambers, ch. 8-9
Texts on institutions (TBA)

Week 10: Tuesday 3/17: No Meeting (Spring Break)

Quiz Period 5

Week 11:

Read:

Gerstle, ch. 5-6
Chambers, ch. 10-12
Book Reviews on Chambers' book. TBA.
Tilly, ch. 6-7

QUIZ SUNDAY 3/22 on Weeks 11 and 12 assigned materials

Week 12: Meeting on Tuesday 3/24

Read:

Gerstle, ch. 7-8
Tilly, ch. 8
Book reviews on Tilly's *Democracy*. TBA

CAPSTONE PERIOD

Week 13: Meeting on Tuesday 3/31:

Conference style discussion of capstone draft

Four presentations (10 minutes each)
Four discussants (10 minutes each)

Week 14: Meeting on Tuesday 4/7:

Conference style discussion of capstone draft

Four presentations (10 minutes each)
Four discussants (10 minutes each)

Week 15: Meeting on Tuesday 4/21:

Conference style discussion of capstone draft

Three presentations (10 minutes each)
Three discussants (10 minutes each)

Week 16: NO Meetings: Deadline for Final version of capstone essay on Wednesday, 4/29.

X. Course Policy Statements

COVID-19 and Illness Notification
Students who believe they may have a COVID-19 diagnosis should contact UCF Student Health Services (407-823-2509) so proper contact tracing procedures can take place.

Students should not come to campus if they are ill, are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID, or if anyone living in their residence has tested positive or is sick with COVID-19 symptoms. CDC guidance for COVID-19 symptoms is located here: (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)

Students should contact their instructor(s) as soon as possible if they miss class for any illness reason to discuss reasonable adjustments that might need to be made. When possible, students should contact their instructor(s) before missing class.

In Case of Faculty Illness
If the instructor falls ill during the semester, there may be changes to this course, including having a backup instructor take over the course. Please look for announcements or mail in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email for any alterations to this course.

Course Accessibility and Disability COVID-19 Supplemental Statement
Accommodations may need to be added or adjusted should this course shift from an on-campus to a remote format. Students with disabilities should speak with their instructor and should contact sas@ucf.edu to discuss specific accommodations for this or other courses.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

Academic Integrity
Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

- *Unauthorized assistance*: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
- *Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means*: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
- *Commercial Use of Academic Material*: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
- *Falsifying or misrepresenting* the student's own academic work.
- *Plagiarism*: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
- *Multiple Submissions*: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
- *Helping another violate* academic behavior standards.
- ***Marien's addition to UCF policy:*** the listing of works cited but not materially used in a post or essay also constitutes a breach of academic honesty. It misrepresents the depth of research done.

For more information about Academic Integrity, students may consult The Center for Academic Integrity.
For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices".
Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating
Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, The Golden Rule. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to

prevent unethical behavior and when necessary, respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade.

Turinitin.com:
In this course the instructor may utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. The instructor submits your texts to Turnitin at his discretion. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a failing grade for the entire course and may incur additional penalties.

Course Accessibility Statement
The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Campus Safety Statement
Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise in our class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of the surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Please make a note of the guide's physical location and consider reviewing the online version at http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html.
- Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, we may need to access a first aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those items are located in this building, see http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/workplacesafety.html (click on link from menu on left).
- To stay informed about emergency situations, sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to my.ucf.edu and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the tool bar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on your Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert," fill out the information, including your e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."

- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.
- To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video. You CAN Survive an Active Shooter

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students
If you are a deployed active-duty military student and feel that you may need a special accommodation due to that unique status, please contact your instructor to discuss your circumstances.

Copyright
This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA
During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need not make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu and http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE – http://oie.ucf.edu/ & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services
- Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- Ombuds Office