Political Science (POLI) 470

Democratic Theory and Practice (Revision 2)

Status:	Replaced with new revision, see the **course listing** ⧉ for the current revision ✖
Delivery mode:	**Individualized study online** ⧉
Credits:	3
Areas of study:	Arts or Social Science
Prerequisites:	None
Precluded:	None
Challenge:	POLI 470 is not available for challenge.
Faculty:	**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences** ⧉
Notes:	**Detailed Syllabus** 🗎 (PDF - 152 KB)

Overview

In this course we ask which modes of thinking about democracy are most appropriate and effective for answering the following questions:

1. Is true democracy an ancient ideal that is only realisable in small communities?

2. Is it a modern ideal well-suited to mass societies characterized by diverse and educated citizenry, pluralism, and advanced technology?

3. Is the pragmatic polity a stable practice and a satisfactory ideal for the whole world?

4. Is it an unstable compound of capitalism, liberalism, and democracy that is mired in contradiction and likely to fail?

5. Is democracy just an instrument for securing other valued goods, such as liberty, non-violence, prosperity, and certain kinds of legal equality?

6. Does it possess sufficient intrinsic merit to be valued as an end in itself?

Outline

POLI 470: Democratic Theory and Practice is divided into 11 units.

- Unit 1: The Concept of Democracy: Universally Valued, Essentially Contested

- Unit 2: Classical Models: Ancient Democracy and Early Modern Republicanism

- Unit 3: The Second Coming of Democracy: Liberal and Radical Responses to Modernity

- Unit 4: Liberal Democracy under Modern Capitalism: Pluralist and Elitist Models

- Unit 5: Challenges to Liberal Democracy

- Unit 6: Deliberative Democracy

- Unit 7: Critical and Postmodern Theory

- Unit 8: Democracy and Citizenship in a Divided World

- Unit 9: Democracy and Citizenship in Diverse Communities: Canada and Its Indigenous Peoples

- Unit 10: Democracy and Globalisation

- Unit 11: Possible Futures

Objectives

When you have completed *POLI 470: Democratic Theory and Practice*, you should be able to

- identify the principal meanings of, and criteria for, democracy;

- distinguish democratic from non-democratic institutions and practices;

- distinguish democracy from related concepts, such as freedom, equality, majority rule, republicanism, constitutionalism, and citizenship;

- describe the main characteristics of multinational constitutional democracies;

- identify the leading models of democracy in terms of their central ideas and historical conditions;

- critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of democratic theories and practices;

- describe how changing social and political conditions have affected the evolution of democratic ideas and practices;

- describe how trends and developments in political theory and philosophy have affected theories of democracy and of democratic citizenship; and

- discuss the prospects for democracy and citizenship in the twenty-first century, particularly in relation to such factors as social, economic, and environmental conditions; power and domination; technological change; globalisation; ethnic diversity, and cultural change.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** ☒ for POLI 470, you must achieve a course composite grade of at least a **D (50 percent)** ⧉ . You must complete four written assignments (two short essays, a research proposal, and a final research

essay), and you must achieve a minimum grade of 50 per cent on Assignment 4. The following chart lists the study activities and the credit weight associated with each activity.

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Short Essay 1	20%
Assignment 2: Research Proposal	10%
Assignment 3: Short Essay 2	20%
Assignment 4: Final Research Essay	50%
Total	**100%**

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's **online Calendar** ☑ .

Materials

Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. 2004. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 📖 (Print)

Held, David. 2006. *Models of Democracy*, third ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 📖 (Print)

Mouffe, Chantal. 2009. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso. 📖 (Print)

Tully, James. 2008. *Public Philosophy in a New Key. Vol. 1: Democracy and Civic Freedom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 📖 (Print)

Other Materials

All other course materials are online.

Important links

> **Academic advising** ⬀

> **Program planning** ⬀

> **Request assistance** ⬀

> **Support services** ⬀

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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View **previous revision** ⬀