

**Democratic Dilemmas**  
Political Science 351  
Winter 2023

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“Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

–*Frederick Douglass*

“Fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”

–*Ruth Bader Ginsburg*

**Course Description**

This course is the core seminar for the Wayne Morse Scholars program. Our focus this term will be on a variety of significant political and policy dilemmas confronting our representative democracy, and on the decisions made by diverse actors in varied contexts as they respond to these challenges. Politics is a world of limits and alternatives, one in which everyone—from voters to presidents—must choose. By training a spotlight on important democratic dilemmas in our social and political life, we will take up important questions about justice, power, and individual rights—how they are distributed, exercised, and contested over time. This seminar also is designed to provide you with a chance to carefully consider how you would respond to tough choices, and to share your ideas and work with others in addressing nettlesome legal, political, and policy issues.

PS 351 is run as a true seminar, with an emphasis on discussions and cooperative learning. The quality of each class is contingent upon how well you prepare and engage with the material and with your classmates. Our goal should be to create intellectual space for classroom interactions that are inclusive and friendly but also provocative, critical, and informed. This seminar embraces lively exchange among all participants. It will feature a blend of in-depth discussions, short lectures, simulations, and hands-on exercises. Strong preparation before class (such as completing the assigned readings on time) and a willingness to participate in cooperative learning will be key. It is essential that you attend every seminar session this term, and significant portion of your grade will be based on attendance and participation. Given your proven ability, you should find the demands of this course to be both manageable and satisfying.

The course begins by focusing on concepts of justice and power, asking about the frameworks each of us employ to confront moral dilemmas, and surveying some of the democratic and anti-democratic traditions that have shaped American politics and culture historically. It will delve into specific policy arenas: drugs, poverty, mental health and illness, reproduction, immigration, and environment. It will consider the U.S. Supreme Court as an institution, the uneasy relationship between presidential power and representative democracy,

and examine the urban/rural conflicts that nourish political and partisan polarization. The course concludes by trying to come to terms with the factors that currently threaten democracy as well as those—including the mobilization of young people—that could strengthen it.

The *Course Schedule and Roadmap* below will provide a helpful schedule and overview of readings, podcasts, and video resources by date and topic. Below you also will find a section on *Guidelines for Productive Discussions*.

## **Course Goals**

Students who complete this course and its assignments will develop an understanding of the key institutions, ideas, and interests at work in American politics, and will gain knowledge about a variety of key substantive policy and issue areas. This course also is designed to help build important critical skills and tools, including the following:

- To gain a demonstrated working knowledge of several major policy and political issues that lie at the heart of U.S. political debates today.
- To develop a deeper understanding of the workings and impact of the American political system at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- To grasp and apply important political concepts and theories of constitutional democracy.
- To help you reason well through varied problems and issues, whether in the classroom or in your personal and professional life. Critical thinking is comprised of asking key questions, gathering relevant information, considering alternative explanations and systems of thought, and drawing conclusions based on this analysis. The work you do in and for this seminar is designed to enhance your critical thinking skills and tools, whether you are engaged in discussions or debates, presentations, or writing. That is, we hope to encourage all participants to ask good questions and explore findings that reach past easy answers to address difficult problems.

## **Guidelines for Productive Discussions**

Below are some useful guidelines for discussions to keep in mind this term for both general discussions and in-class debates:

*Discussing to Learn:* Contribute ideas and views in the spirit of inquiring and learning together, rather than trying to debate or win arguments (unless the activity is designed as a debate or to assess best arguments).

*Mindful Listening:* Listen actively with attention and respect for what others are saying, without interrupting or tuning out to focus on preparing one's own contribution.

*Stepping Up/Stepping Back:* Pay attention to the voices in the room and be mindful of one's contributions. Are there patterns regarding which voices are being heard and which are not? How do I fit in these patterns? Is there need to step back and let others have opportunity to contribute? Is there need to step up and contribute more? Do we feel empowered to hold ourselves accountable for our class participation dynamics?

*Listening Lenience:* Remember that we are learning together and may not necessarily get something right the first or even second try. Practice being lenient with oneself and with others. Restating what someone just said can provide them an opportunity to clarify or revise their statement. Similarly, it is good practice to state when you say something not quite right and then try to state it again or ask for help in saying it.

*Ideas not Individuals:* Focus on engaging others' ideas not judging or criticizing individuals. Asking for clarification can be helpful, and using language such as "The idea I hear you saying is..." (rather than "you said") or "I don't agree with that idea..." (rather than "I don't agree with you").

*Support Our Statements:* Offer supporting evidence of some kind to back up your contributions, such as data, clear reasoning or reference to a text, and be aware that your own experience or an anecdotal story may not fit a larger pattern.

*A Part is Not the Whole:* Remember that your view or experience is your view or experience, a partial opening onto the whole, and not necessarily a general view or experience of everyone; nor are the views or experiences of others necessarily going to match your own. And, just as you cannot represent an entire group of people, nor can anyone else represent a group of people. It is quite okay for everyone to speak their truth and their experience, but working from individual views and experiences to more general ideas or conclusions often requires considerable work.

*Mutual Respect:* A key goal is to respect diverse experiences, viewpoints, approaches, and identities. Even when we disagree, please do not undermine, demean, or marginalize others.

### **Course Readings and Podcasts**

All of the readings for this course are available on our Canvas site. Links to assigned podcasts also are provided on the syllabus and our Canvas site. Specific reading and podcast assignments can be found on the course schedule/roadmap provided below and on our Canvas site.

### **Course Requirements and Grades**

All of you have been selected as Wayne Morse Scholars because you are highly motivated individuals, and our expectation is that everyone will have an opportunity to shine in this course.

Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of quality participation and engagement in our seminar gatherings, a course journal, a research paper on a key democratic threat, participation, and leading discussion. Here is a breakdown of the core requirements and graded components of this course:

- **Quality of class participation (30%):** In a small seminar such as ours, the strength of the course is dependent on the quality of your preparation and engagement. Ideally, our discussions and other shared activities will be encouraging, inclusive, analytical, informed, and eye-opening. To pull this off, you will need to read and reflect upon the assigned readings before class (see below for a schedule and list of readings to be completed for each session). Below are several recommendations for productive classroom discussions that we will consider and revise to our collective liking during the first session.
- **Course journal (40%):** The course journal will enable you to briefly reflect on the material for each class. Each journal entry should be roughly 1-2 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) in response to one or more of the prompts (*Class Prompts* on Canvas) for each class session. You should make direct use of readings, podcasts, videos, and other material assigned for that session. If you improvise your entry without having engaged this assigned material (as delineated on the *Course Schedule and Roadmap*) or if you do not address one or more of the prompts, it is usually obvious and will significantly lower your grade. Your journal entries should evidence clear engagement with assigned material, be written clearly, and be proofread before submission. You will be asked to turn in your journal four times during the term: January 30, February 13, March 1, and March 15.

**Leadership Dilemma paper:** Conduct a personal interview with a public official or NGO leader about a decision on a particular political or policy issue that was difficult or controversial. The interviewee might be a current or former leader of a nonprofit group or community organization, a local mayor, schoolboard member, or councilperson, a movement leader, a judge, head of an advocacy or lobby group, a lawmaker in the Oregon legislature, an academic leader, or a federal office-holder. Your approximately 4-5 page paper (double-spaced) should explain and critically analyze the interviewee's decision. You also should attach your notes from the interview at the end of the paper (can be handwritten or typed). This paper will comprise 15% of your final grade, and will be due on March 22<sup>nd</sup> by 5pm.

- **Final Essay (Take-Home):** During finals week, you will be asked to complete a take-home final essay (approximately 3-4 pages, double spaced) in response to one of two prompts distributed by the last class session. Your essay can draw from your notes and can reference readings, podcasts, and other sources with brief parenthetical cites, such as (Sandel, 17-18). This essay will comprise 15% of your final grade.

**Calculating the Grade:** Your final grade will be calculated based on the following:

Quality of Class Participation	30%
First-Quarter Journal (January 30)	10%
Second-Quarter Journal (February 13)	10%
Third-Quarter Journal (March 1)	10%
Fourth-Quarter Journal (March 15)	10%
Leadership Dilemma Paper (March 17)	15%
Take-Home Final Essay (March 22)	15%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE & ROADMAP**

### **January 9—Introductions**

Before class:

- Open and read the Syllabus (on Canvas)

### **January 11—Visions of a Just Democracy: Freedom, Welfare, and Virtue**

Before class:

- Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing To Do?*, chapters 1 and 3.
- *Philosophize This* podcast, "John Rawls—A Theory of Justice," Link: <https://www.philosophizethis.org/podcast/theory-of-justice> .

### **January 16—MLK Holiday**

### **January 18—Ideas that Shaped America: Democratic and Undemocratic Traditions**

- Nikole Hannah-Jones 1619 podcast episode 1, "[The Fight for a True Democracy](#)," August 23, 2019.
- *Federalist* #10, from a series of essays written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, published in 1787 and 1788 to encourage readers to ratify the proposed U.S. Constitution.
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated and edited by Havey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop vol. 2, Part 4, Chapter 6 and first few paragraphs of Chapter 7 (University of Chicago Press, 2000). *Democracy in America* was published in 1835 (vol. 1) and 1840 (vol. 2).
- U.S. Constitution, 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, section 1, ratified 1868.
- Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" (1893)
- Shirley Jackson, "[The Lottery](#)," *The New Yorker*, June 18, 1948 (audio and text versions available at this link).
- Matthew Desmond, "American Capitalism is Brutal," *The New Times*, September 24, 2019.

### **January 23—Polarization and the Ideological Commitments of Red State America**

- Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, chapters 1-2, 9, and 15.

- Radikaal podcast, “Katherine Cramer on Rural Consciousness and the Politics of Resentment,” link: <https://soundcloud.com/radikaalpodcast/katherine-cramer-on-rural-consciousness-and-the-politics-of-resentment>

### **January 25—Growing up in Rural, Conservative America**

- Tera Westover, *Educated*, prologue, chapters 1, 16-18, 28-29.
- OWN Podcasts, “Supersoul Special: Tera Westover *Educated*.” Link: <https://www.oprah.com/own-podcasts/super-soul-special-tara-westover-educated>

### **January 30—Mental Health and Mental Illness: Children and Adolescents**

- Danielle Carr, “Mental Health is Political,” *New York Times*, September 20, 2022. (6 pages)
- Rachel Aviv, *Strangers to Ourselves: Unsettled Minds and the Stories that Make Us* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2022), prologue: Rachel, “someone better than me” (approx 25 pages)
- Kassie Bracken, Matt Richtel, Ben Laffin, and Elliot deBruyn, “[Worried Sick: A Journey into the Anxious Teenage Mind](#),” April 23, 2022. (15-minute video)
- Podcast: “[Inside the Adolescent Mental Health Crisis](#),” The Daily, August 30, 2022 (30 minutes)
- U.S. Surgeon General Advisory, “Protecting Youth Mental Health,” 2021, summary of findings (3-5 pages) and brief excerpt on “What Young People Can Do” (2 pages)
- “[UO Experts Address Youth Mental Health Crisis](#),” Around the O, October 5, 2022.

### **February 1—Community Mental Health After World War II: Progressive Reform or Origin of Mass Incarceration and Homelessness?**

- Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, “The Social Responsibility of Psychiatry: A Statement of Orientation,” 1950.
- [John F. Kennedy addresses Congress on Mental Health and Mental Retardation](#), February 5, 1963. (3 minutes)
- Gerald Grob, *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America’s Mentally Ill* (Free Press, 1994), chapter 10, “The New Frontier and the Promise of Community Mental Health,” pp. 249-278.
- [Video about Judi Chamberlin](#), an important figure in the history of the psychiatric survivors’ movement (5 minutes)
- [Video clip, Dr. Thomas Szasz](#), on the myth of mental illness and the social role of psychiatry (4 minutes)
- Nic John Ramos, “Pathologizing the Crisis: Psychiatry, Policing, and Racial Liberalism in the Long Community Mental Health Movement,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, (January 2019), pp. 57-84.

### **February 6—Reproductive Health and Reproductive Justice: History**

- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (Vintage, 1997), chapter 1, “Reproduction in Bondage,” pp. 22-55.
- Margaret Sanger, “The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda,” *Birth Control Review*, 1921.
- *Buck v. Bell*, 1929
- Sterilization and Social Justice Lab, [“The Movement That Inspired the Holocaust” animation](#) (5 minutes)
- Amanda Morris, ‘You Just Feel Like Nothing’: California to Pay Sterilization Victims, *New York Times*, July 14, 2021.

### **February 8—Reproductive Health and Reproductive Justice: Abortion**

- Clip from “The Janes,” a documentary about the Jane Collective
- *Roe v. Wade*, 1973, excerpts
- *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, 2022, excerpts
- Mary Ziegler, “When Fetal Rights Are More Important Than Democracy,” *The Atlantic*, October 3, 2022.

### **February 13— The “Traditional Dilemma” of Freedom versus Order: U.S. Drug Wars**

- Michael Massing, “The Real Scandal in the Fight Against Opioids,” *Politico*, July 21, 2018.
- “The Once and Future Drug War,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 2022.
- Back Story podcast, “Tolerance: A History of Drink,” Link: <https://www.backstoryradio.org/shows/tolerance-a-history-of-drink/>
- WNYC *Notes from America with Kai Wright* podcast, “The Drug War” Link: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/anxiety/episodes/episode-10-drug-war>

### **February 15— The “Modern Dilemma” of Freedom versus Equality: Poverty Politics**

- Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief*, chapter 2.
- Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, intro and chapter 1.
- Ingram and Schneider, “Social Construction of Target Populations.”
- Roosevelt, “Commonwealth Club Address,” September, 1932.

### **February 20—The Supreme Court: Legitimacy and Counter-Majoritarian Politics**

- Linda Greenhouse, *Justice at the Brink*
- Tera Leigh Grove, “The Supreme Court’s Legitimacy Dilemma,” *Harvard Law Review*, 2019.
- Ian Millhiser, “Ten Ways to Fix a Broken Supreme Court,” *Vox*, July 2, 2022.

### **February 22—Liberty, Security, and Presidential Power**

- Eric Foner, “War Fever,” *The Nation*, February 7, 2023.
- Daniel Klaidman, “Drones: The Silent Killers,” *Newsweek*, May 28, 2012.
- Geoffrey Stone, *War and Liberty*, chapter 4.

### **February 27— Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Reform (Simulation, I)**

- Jessica Bolter, “Immigration Has Been a Defining Element,” Migration Policy Institute.

### **March 1— Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Reform (Simulation, II)**

- Harvard Immigration and Democracy podcast, “How Nativism Paved the Way for Trump’s Immigration War,”  
Link: <https://soundcloud.com/immigrationanddemocracy/s1-ep6-an-all-american-wake-up-call-how-nativism-paved-the-way-for-trumps-immigrant-war>Links to an external site.
- Daniel Tichenor, “The Quest for Elusive Reform,” United States and Mexico Center Working Paper.

### **March 6—Imperiled Democracy: Historical and Cross-National Perspectives**

- Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*
- Jill Lepore, “The Last Time Democracy Almost Died,” *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2020.

### **March 8—Imperiled Democracy: Historical and Cross-National Perspectives**

- Leonhardt, “A Crisis Coming’: The Twin Threats to Democracy,” *The New York Times Magazine*, September 17, 2022.
- Three Harvard Scholars on Threats to Democracy, *The Harvard Gazette*, November 4, 2022.

### **March 13—Young People and Democracy: The Politics of Control and Abandonment**

- Gash and Tichenor, *Democracy’s Child*, chapter 2.

### **March 15—Young People and Democracy: Political Leverage and Agency**

- Gash and Tichenor, *Democracy’s Child*, chapter 4.
- Gash and Tichenor, “Gen Z Might Turn Young Voters into a Political Power,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2022.

### **Accessible Education**

If you have a disability that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please let me know. In addition, please request a letter from the Accessible Education Center (346-1155, 164 Oregon Hall) that verifies your disability and states the accommodations that you need. We will make any reasonable adjustments necessary to improve your learning environment.

### **Notice of duty to report**



We support Title IX and have a duty to report relevant information. The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Any UO employee who becomes aware that such behavior is occurring has a duty to report that information to their supervisor or the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance. The University Health Center and Counseling Services can provide assistance and have a greater ability to work confidentially with students.

### **University Health and Counseling Services**

University Health Services staff help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at [health.uoregon.edu/ducknest](http://health.uoregon.edu/ducknest).

Counseling Services has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at [counseling.uoregon.edu](http://counseling.uoregon.edu) or by calling 541-346-3227. When Counseling Services is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number.