In this course, we examine the evolution of Western democratic theory and some of the key concepts that underlie it. We will examine varied philosophical evaluations of democracy (both justifications and critiques) and will consider how these are linked to conceptions of human nature. We will also be concerned with the relation between wisdom and consent, between liberty and equality, and between sovereignty and individual freedom.

The course will also trace the historically changing meanings of democracy. We will analyze the circumstances that foster or, alternatively, threaten the democratic success of modern representative democratic regimes and societies.

**Course Objectives:**

One goal of the course is to try to understand original attempts by major thinkers to think through important and enduring democratic problems. A related objective is to give students an understanding of some key debates in Western democratic theory.

The course is also designed to help students learn the art of interpretation by practicing it. A related goal of the course is to teach the importance of careful reading.
The course also aims to help students become clearer writers, to refine their skills of argumentation, and to engage in critical thinking.

Note: The course will proceed by close textual and contextual study of primarily classical philosophical texts. You are asked to complete the readings before class and to bring the text under study to class. Our approach will be theoretical.

This is a manual note-taking lecture and discussion course. The use or display of any mobile computing or communications devices (including computers, recording devices, phones, iPads, or iPods) is strictly banned during class, except with the explicit permission of the instructor in exceptional cases. Exceptions: Explicit permission for the use of a computer may be granted by the professor in particular circumstances for students for whom its use is justified to facilitate in-class note-taking or learning. You must receive explicit permission from the professor in such a case.

Required Texts

***A required package of readings. Available at the McGill Textbook store.

***Books: The following titles will be available at Paragraph Bookstore, 2220 McGill College Ave.


Course Requirements:

Conference Grade: Based on Conference Attendance and Participation 10%
Short Paper (1400-1600 words) (Due Wed. Oct. 24) 30%
True/False Rousseau and Tocqueville Quiz (Wed. Nov. 14) 10%
Take-home Exam (Due Tues. Dec. 18, 1400-1800 words) 50%
Short Paper: A description of the criteria that will be used in marking both the essay and the take-home will be handed out when the essay questions are distributed. The criteria will include: clarity, precision, organization, coherent justification, focus, and provision of evidence.

Policy regarding late papers: A penalty of one half point per day will be imposed on all late papers not excused by a doctor’s certificate. Unless you have documentation proving that serious unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or family affliction, have arisen, you can expect the penalty to be fairly and consistently applied.

The true/false quiz will be held on **Wed. Nov. 14** at 9:30 a.m. Students will have from that time until the end of class to write the quiz. You will be responsible for all Rousseau and Tocqueville selections. In exceptional circumstances, a make-up quiz may be written but only if students have documentation proving that serious unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or family affliction, have arisen.

Take home exam: The take-home assignment sheet with detailed instructions will be handed out on the last day of classes. There will be a choice of essay questions. You will be asked to write a response of 1400-2000 words on one of the questions. Your take-home exam should be your own independent work. The take-homes will be due Tues. Dec. 18 by 12 noon. It should be handed in to me prior to that time or from 10 a.m.-12 noon in my office on that day.

**Schedule of Readings:**

***Numbers refer to readings in the course pack.

Week of:

**Wed. Sept. 5** Introduction

**The Changing Meaning of Democracy**

**Mon. Sept. 10**

Wed. Sept. 12


**Anti-Democrats, Ancient and Modern**

Mon. Sept. 17


Wed. Sept. 19


-Also required: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 21 (On Reserve)

**Democratic Self-Government and Enlightenment**

Mon. Sept. 24 Rousseau, *First Discourse* (entire text, i.e. pages 4-28)


**Rousseau’s Defense of Direct Democracy**


Mon. Oct. 1 Quebec Election; No Classes. Please continue reading: *Second Discourse* Parts I and II

Wed. Oct. 3 Rousseau, *Second Discourse* Parts I and II

Mon. Oct. 8 Thanksgiving; No classes

Mon. Oct. 15 *Social Contract* Book II


Mon. Oct. 22 *Social Contract* Book IV

Wed. Oct. 24 **Short Essays Due**; Film T.B.A

**Tocqueville on the Promise of Modern Representative Democracy**


Wed. Nov. 7 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chapters 6-9, continued. Note: Some English editions will list Chapters 6-9 of Vol. 1, Part 2 as Chapters 14-17 instead


**True/false Quiz** at 9:30 a.m. Note that for the quiz you are responsible for all the Rousseau and Tocqueville selections up to and including the Tocqueville readings for Wed. Nov. 14.

**Democracy, Diversity, the Public and the Private**

Mon. Nov. 19 Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, chapters 1 and 2

Wed. Nov. 21 Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, chapter 3

Mon. Nov. 26 Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, chapter 4
Wed. Nov. 28 Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, chapter 5

Mon. Dec. 3 Jürgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy,”


**Tues. Dec. 4.** Conclusion. Take-home exams distributed. *****

**Please Note:** The last day of class is exceptionally on Tuesday Dec. 4 because on that day Monday-Wednesday classes at McGill follow a Tuesday schedule.

Please also note the following:

**Language of Submission:**

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.*

*Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).*

**Academic Integrity:**

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures* *(see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).* *(Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)*

*L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).*
Additional Statements

- The **University Student Assessment Policy** exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations.

- **As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.”**

- McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

  L’Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d’échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissions et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

- **End-of-course evaluations** are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.