

HONORS 300S—Spring 2020
American Democracy: Problems and Prospects
Dr. Rob Baker
Hollenbeck 300; 327-6105 (o)
jbaker@wittenberg.edu

Course Objective

Clearly, 1989 was a watershed year for democracy. The Tiananmen Square uprising in Beijing, Nelson Mandela's imminent release from prison in South Africa, and the fall of the Berlin Wall all signified that democratic impulses were beginning to triumph around the world. The next couple of decades saw incredible progress toward democracy in many countries that were formerly governed by authoritarian (t)-2 (ha)limes. However, more recent trajectories point to a (t)-2 (ha)assertion of authoritarian, populist, and anti-liberal parties, movements, and regimes that seriously threaten democracy at home and abroad. Sadly, however, many Americans have drawn the mistaken conclusion that the United States can't succumb to these kinds of anti-democratic impulses based on a notion that is predicated on the perceived perfection of our own political system. Many Americans have failed to see that in spite of all our progress toward democratic ideals in the United States, our system has still fallen short of achieving them. In the midst of post-9/11 fallout, the Great Recession, and the recent foreign threats to our electoral processes, it's even more important to take a critical look at the problems and prospects

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will have achieved the following learning outcomes.

1. Gain a critical understanding of 8 challenges to American Democracy through readings and discussions.
2. Improve ability to give oral presentations.
3. Improve ability to analyze and present empirical data through assigned papers.
4. Learn what a deliberative poll is by helping to conduct one as a final class project.

Required Texts/Readings

Books

Core Text: Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, 8th Edition.

Theme Books:

Hulse, Confirmation Bias

Austin, We Must Not Be Enemies.

Winkler, We the Corporations.

Diversity in American Politics

Since this course fulfills general education requirements, one of the emphases will

be to get you to identify and wrestle with the (p)1 (er)-.14 refEo(r)-2 (,)1 (o (nd d (o)5 (r)-2 re)-1 (,)Tm)TJ

signature: “I affirm that my work upholds the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at Wittenberg, and that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance.” Please refer to the following web site for a complete description of the [University’s Policy on Academic Integrity](#).

Need for Accommodations

Wittenberg University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision and neurological, or temporary medical conditions, etc.) please, let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you must register with Accessibility Services by contacting Gwen Owen, the Director of Accessibility Services at 937-327-7870 or by email at oweng@wittenberg.edu . Please note that services are confidential and may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive. The Accessibility Services Office is located in the Office of Academic Services COMPASS Sweet Success Center, Thomas Library on the first floor. Walk-in appointments are welcome 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday.

Deliberative Polling Exercise

As a culmination of the semester’s work, the class will organize, advertise, and administer a deliberative poll on 1-2 issues that have been identified as the most significant ones to discuss with a larger audience. This exercise will be modeled on the National Issues Forums and previously-conducted deliberative polls in the U.S. and elsewhere. More information about this form of democratic debate can be found at the National Issues Forum website (<http://www.nifi.org/>), as well as the following sites: (<http://participedia.net/en/methods/deliberative-polling>); and (<http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/dpolling/>)

Article Summary/Presentation

During a designated seminar session, each student will be assigned a relevant journal article/book chapter to be prepared to lead discussion on during the session. You should prepare a 2-3 page (single-spaced) typed summary of the article that includes a brief biography of the author, a discussion of the sources/data used, an overview of what the author says, his/her methodology, etc., as well as a short reaction on your part. This will be due at the end of the class session in which it is presented. The key aspects of your grade for this assignment will be how well you present the article to the class, and how well you connect its substance to the class topic for the unit. You should use PowerPoint, or Prezi as the platform for the presentation. A sample article summary is on Moodle, please use this format (including single-spacing).

Grades

Grades will be based on the following: a midterm, WEB-based research assignments, 1 article presentation/summary, reading quizzes, a “Letter to the Editor” of a paper of your choosing, participation in the Deliberative Polling exercise, and class

participation. Grade breaks at the 10th percentile. The breakdown of the points is as follows:

Midterm Exam	100
Web-based Research Assignments	250
Article Summary/Presentation	50
Quizzes	100
Participation in Deliberative Poll	50
Letter to the Editor	25
Participation in Class Discussions	<u>50</u>
Total	625

Course Outline (Readings in parentheses)

WEEK 1(1/13-1/17)

- M Introduction to the course and the Main Thesis (Syllabus; Hudson, Preface)
- W Precursors to Modern Democracy—Greeks, Locke, and Hobbes (Hudson, pp. 1-8); & Models of Democracy (Hudson, pp. 8-23)
 - Protective v. Developmental Democracy
 - Pluralist Democracy v. Participatory Democracy
- F Discussion: The Models Compared (H pp. 18-19; Baker, “Does Our Democracy Measure Up?”—Article 1)

WEEK 2 (1/20-1/24)

- M The First Challenge to American Democracy--Separation of Powers
The Founders’ Work (Hudson, pp. 25-33)
- Responsiveness and Accountability (Hudson, pp. 34-41)
 - (a)-1 (b)3 (l)-2 (i)-2 (F)1 discussion:Chiam

Powe-ist

F

Di1

(o)1

()1.1

Week 4 (2/3-2/7)

M Individual Reflection on Readings

W Confirmation Bias? (Hulse, Ch. 14-24)

F Confirmation Bias? (Hulse, Ch. 25-34).

WEEK 5 (2/10-2/14) Theme Book: Austin

M 3rd

WEEK 10 (3/23-3/27)

M Alternative Election Systems (Baker, “What About Congressional Term Limits?”—
Article 11; Baker, “To Grow Democracy, Start Small, Think Big”—Article 12)

W Article Presentations

F **3rd Web-based paper assignments due in class: Discussion of Findings**

- Hudson, William E. 2008. "The Libertarian Illusion in Contemporary Public Policy and the Case for a Communitarian Alternative," in *The Libertarian Illusion*, pp. 130
- Kawachi, et al. 1997. "Social Capital, Income Inequality, and Mortality," *American Journal of Public Health* 87: 1491-1498.
- Lynch, John W., et al., 1998. "Income Inequality and Mortality in Metropolitan Areas of the United States," *American Journal of Public Health* 88:1074-1080.
- Parenti, Michael. 1995. "Democracy for the Few," in *Democracy for the Few*, pp. 312-325.
- Peterson, Mark. 1993. "Political Influence in the 1990s: From 'Iron Triangles' to 'Policy Networks,'" *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law* 18(Summer): 395-438.
- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in the America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28(December): 664-683.
- Sabato, Larry. 1981. "The Media Masters," in *The Rise of Political Consultants*, pp. 143-179.
- Schneider, William. 1992. "The Dawn of the Suburban Era in American Politics," *Atlantic Monthly* (July): 33-57.
- Solt, Frederick. 2010. "Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral Participation? Testing the Schattschneider Hypothesis," *Political Behavior* 32:285-301.
- Soros, George. 1997. "The Capitalist Threat," *The Atlantic Monthly* (February): 45-58.
- Sundquist, James L.. 1988. "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 103: 613-635.
- Warren, Mark E. 1996. "Deliberative Democracy and Authority," *American Political Science Review* 90 (March): 460.
- Wilson, James Q.. 1987. "Does the Separation of Powers Still Work?" *Public Interest* 37-52.
- Wolff, Robert Paul. 1970. "Beyond the Legitimate State," in *In Defense of Anarchism*, pp. 69-82.