COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE

This 3000-level, 3 credit hour seminar course in political theory introduces students to a variety of debates about the nature and form of democracy. Our primary objective is to uncover some of the complexities inherent in the concept of “democracy,” and to consider the implications of transnational and global developments for democratic theory and practice. C.B. MacPherson, Wendy Brown, Michel Foucault and Isaiah Berlin are among the many important theorists we will encounter. The course focuses in particular on their treatment of such fundamental concepts as liberty, equality, rights and sovereignty. Material is drawn from the mid-18th century up to the present moment. Readings focus on classic democratic principles and on the pressing challenges to democracy arising from populism and neoliberalism in the contemporary global context.

Required course material:

• The custom course pack will be available for purchase at the University Bookstore.

• Additional required material is available digitally online (Brightspace) and in hard copy from the Reserve Desk at the Patrick Power Library

Class Accessibility & Support

Your success is important to me. I am committed to making this class as accessible as possible, as I believe that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with me during my office hours or at another arranged time, if necessary. Students are also strongly encouraged to avail themselves of the services provided by the Fred Smithers Centre of Support for Students with Disabilities. The Fred Smithers Centre is located on the third floor of the Student Centre.

Format

This class meets weekly for 2.5 hours on Thursday afternoons during the Fall term. Class time will typically be taken up with lectures and seminar discussion, student presentations and occasional small group work. Attendance and assignments are mandatory. Missed classes or late assignments will not be excused unless accompanied by appropriate documentation from a doctor or other relevant professional. This course is reading and writing intensive.
Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- Four (4) Critical response papers/presentations (15% each) 60%
- Final essay 25%
- Class participation & preparedness 15%

**Response Papers:** You are required to present and submit a total of four (4) critical responses on assigned dates to assigned questions. Each response should be roughly 750 words (2-3 pages). Responses will be presented informally in class and then handed in. These writing assignments are intended to increase your critical reading and writing skills, to familiarize you closely with various theoretical positions, and to introduce you to an advanced level of academic scholarship. New questions will be provided in advance each week.

**Discussion Questions:**
You are also required to produce your own discussion questions for every week in which you are not presenting a response paper (assignment instructions are attached). Students who are not presenting their responses will pose critical questions to the presenters and will raise points for seminar discussion. Discussion questions & comments should be in the range of 500 words each (approximately 1-2 pages).

**Final Essay:** A final, 1500-1800 word essay (roughly 5-6 pages) based on a selection of texts studied during the term. Essays are due by **12:00 noon on Thursday, December 5th**. Students will present first drafts of their essays in class on November 28th in a “round-table” discussion format, so as to benefit from suggestions and constructive feedback before the essays are due. This assignment will help you to develop your argumentative writing skills and to assimilate what you have learned during the term.

Papers and essays that lack adequate documentation, and/or that stray unreasonably beyond the length requirements in either direction, will be penalized.

**Handing in Written Work:**

- Assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class, unless otherwise indicated.
- Assignments must include a COVER PAGE with your NAME, the COURSE SPECIFICATIONS, an assignment TITLE (NB. “Paper #1” is not an adequate title), and a final WORD COUNT.
- All assignments must be DOUBLE-SPACED, STAPLED, and in 12-POINT FONT with 1-INCH MARGINS all around.
- You are expected to follow Departmental APA STYLE consistently for all citations, references and footnotes or endnotes, and must provide a full bibliographical entry for every resource that has been used, including internet sources. (The style guide is available on Brightspace.)
- Students are required to KEEP COPIES of all work. If your assignment is lost or misplaced, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy upon request.

**Late Policy:** Late assignments will be not be accepted except in extreme and documented cases. Requests for extensions must be submitted in advance of the due date and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation. There will be no exceptions.
Participation: Active participation (including attendance) in seminars is essential. Participation marks of up to 15% of the final grade will be based on the quality of your preparedness for class and your engagement with the material, particularly with respect to the quality of the questions and comments you prepare for discussion.

Students who are not adequately prepared for class will not receive full marks for this component of the final grade.

IF YOU ARE UNSURE HOW TO DOCUMENT YOUR WORK OR IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AT ALL ABOUT LECTURES OR ISSUES DISCUSSED IN CLASS, PLEASE DO CONSULT WITH ME – AFTER CLASS, BY PHONE, BY EMAIL OR DURING REGULAR OFFICE HOURS. I WILL DO MY UTMOST TO RESPOND TO YOUR CONCERNS.

COURSE OVERVIEW
(readings & dates may be subject to change)

SEPT 5: Introduction to course and material.


SEPT 26: Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” (cont.). Available online and on reserve.


OCT 10: Sarah Song, “The boundary problem in democratic theory: Why the demos should be bounded by the state.”


OCT 31: Wendy Brown, “Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism’s Remaking of State and Subject” (Chapter 1 of Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution). Available online and on reserve at the Library.

NOV 7: Michel Foucault, "Eleven: 28 March, 1979" (from The Birth of BioPolitics).

November 11-17: Study Week (no classes)

NOV 21: Wendy Brown, “Revising Foucault: Homo Politicus and Homo Oeconomicus.” (Chapter 3 of Undoing the Demos), and Patchen Markell, “Neoliberalism’s Uneven Revolution: Reflections on Wendy Brown’s Undoing the Demos.”

NOV 28: Round-table paper presentations and wrap-up

DECEMBER 5: Final essays due no later than Thursday December 5th by 12:00pm (noon)

(Please turn over.../4)
A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility are the five pillars of academic integrity at Saint Mary’s University. Any form of dishonesty, cheating, falsification or plagiarism is considered an extremely serious academic offence and will not be tolerated in this course. Students found to have committed an act of plagiarism or to have cheated will automatically and without consultation receive an ‘F’ and, upon final determination, a notification of plagiarism may be added to the student's official file by the Registrar's Office as per University regulations.

Reference to or appropriation of any other person’s work, regardless of whether it is directly quoted or is merely paraphrased, must be acknowledged by proper citation. Otherwise it constitutes plagiarism. When in doubt, seek the advice of the instructor before submitting the work. Submission of the same piece of work for credit in more than one course is also not permitted. (Adapted from the Saint Mary’s University, Academic Calendar).

It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of what constitutes academic fraud and plagiarism according to the definitions of the University, and to understand the consequences such acts carry. If unsure, consult the instructor and also the Academic Calendar, Section 2 (Regulation 19), on “Academic Integrity and Student Responsibility.”

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**MARKING SCHEME:**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>90-100</td>
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<td>67-69.9</td>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>85-89.9</td>
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<td>A</td>
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THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Prepare a set of 3-4 discussion questions and comments of up to 500 words (approx. 1-2 pages) based on the assigned readings. For seminars with two readings, individual questions/comments are required for both texts.

Instructions: Your objective when preparing discussion questions and comments is to formulate thoughts that go to the heart of the argument in question. Questions/comments should be directly tied to specific aspects of the text, and they should highlight the important, interesting or central assumptions, claims, and arguments that the author is making, as well as their ethical and political implications.

All written submissions must be double-spaced, correctly formatted (as per the guidelines on the syllabus), and properly documented. They are due in class.

When developing a set of comments & questions for in-class discussion, bear in mind the following questions and try to answer them:

• What is the author’s actual point? (How would you formulate the thesis?)
• Is the argument consistent and coherent? (Do all the pieces add up, or does the author appear to contradict him/her/themselves?)
• What strikes you as particularly important and/or problematic about this piece?
• Is anything important or significant overlooked, or left out of the discussion?
• Do the conclusions follow from the evidence/arguments the author has presented?
• Are there any moments or sections that do not seem to follow, or to make sense?
• Are the conclusions themselves actually interesting, significant or important?
• Are there any unspoken assumptions that could be challenged?
• If the author was right in front of you, what would you want to say to him/her/them?