

DEMOCRACY AND DIVERSITY

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Sarah Lawrence College
2006-7, Syllabus for Spring Term
Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-11:00
Heimbold 211

Course description: Does democracy work only in homogeneous societies that overcome by assimilating sources of difference and diversity? Only in this way, it has long been maintained, can a people be sufficiently similar to form shared political understandings and projects. Absent commonality, democracy deteriorates into the tyranny of the majority or a war of all against all. But we are in the midst of a dramatic shift in democratic politics: democratic societies are increasingly multicultural and diverse, while citizens in democratic societies are less willing to ‘forget’ their ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, cultural, racial and other differences in order to integrate into a dominant national culture. These developments raise some basic questions. Is it possible to achieve sufficient agreement on fundamental political issues in a deeply diverse society? Can the character of political community or the nation be reconceived and reformed? If not, is democracy doomed? Or might it be possible to reform democracy to render it compatible with conditions of diversity? If so, does the democratic claim to legitimacy also need to be transformed? This course will explore these questions in a number of ways. First we study two exemplary historical statements of the ideal of democracy to get our bearings from conceptions developed without attention to the kinds of deep and abiding difference that concern us in the rest of the course. Then we examine the nature of social and cultural diversity, looking at several dimensions that tend to cut across one another in contemporary politics: religion, value, class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and culture. In addressing these issues we draw on methodologies and disciplines ranging from sociology and anthropology to ethnic studies and philosophy. In the remainder of the course we bring these themes together by surveying a number of recent attempts to (re-) articulate the relevance of specific identities to political engagement and the general ideal of democracy in light of experiences with increased diversity. Here the disciplinary focus is on reading sustained selections from recent works in political philosophy. We look at these ideas generally and also by considering more specific issues like equality under the law, the compatibility of multiculturalism and feminism, immigration, and education. Finally, we also respond to dominant political events of our recent history by asking: Can the ‘clash’ between non-Western, especially Islamic, and Western cultures be mediated democratically, or is democracy itself a culturally specific, Western form of politics? Should democratic societies seek to foster or impose democratic institutions and practices on other societies or international institutions?

Requirements and Grades: There are three main requirements this term: regular informed participation in class discussion and conferences based on careful reading and critical thought; an interpretive essay of seven to ten pages; and either completion of a term-long conference paper (of roughly fifteen to twenty pages) or satisfactory progress on a yearlong conference project. Occasional exercises may also be assigned. Interpretive essays are due the week after the unit they are based on (or at the end of term in the case of the final unit). The conference paper will count for forty percent of the grade, participation for forty, and the interpretive essays for twenty. (Though not marked on assignments, grades are available upon request.) Extensions will be granted only in the case of a genuine emergency. In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one third of a grade per day late. Note that class readings are both relatively heavy, averaging between 100 and 200 pages per week, and quite dense.

Absences: Three unexcused class absences are allowed per term. Additional absences will result in loss of class credit. Unexcused conference absences will not be rescheduled and may also lead to loss of credit.

Special Needs: I encourage students with disabilities, including invisible disabilities like chronic diseases and learning or psychiatric disabilities, to contact me regarding specific needs.

Texts: Please use the specific editions listed below, available through the Sarah Lawrence Bookstore. They can also be purchased on line, often for a considerable savings. I recommend websites that link independent bookstores, especially since it is often possible to get these texts used in near-new condition. (Advanced Book Exchange [www.abe.com], Fetch Book [www.fetchbook.info], Alibris [www.alibris.com] and Amazon's used book service [www.amazon.com] offer this service.)

- Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*
- Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*
- Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*
- Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*
- Ayelet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights*
- James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*;
- Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*
- Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Mistrust*
- Susan Moller Okin, et. al., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*
- Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*

Weekly Reading And Writing Assignments:

Part III: Race, Culture, Identity and Democracy

Week 1: The Many Faces of Race in America

These readings should be done over the break. In addition to the Winant, each student should read one of the two clusters of articles. Please e-mail me to let me know what you've chosen. All readings except Winant are on reserve.

Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto*, pp.1-176, 289-316.

Cluster 2: (Donna, Daniela, Meredith and Bianca)

James Barrett and David Roediger, "How White People Became White"

Charles Gallagher, "White Racial Formation: Into the Twenty-First Century"

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"

Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "The Antidemocratic Power of Whiteness"

Week 2: The Many Faces of Race in America

Cluster 3:

C.J. Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans"

Samuel Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy*

Héctor Tobar, *Translation Nation* (selections)

Cluster 4:

Jonathan Kozol, "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid," *Harpers*, v.311, n.1864, 1 September, 2005.

Kim M. Williams, "Multiracialism & the Civil Rights Future"

Claire Jean Kim, "Unyielding Positions: A Critique of the 'Race' Debate"

Week 3: Race Solidarity and Race Betrayal

Race Mapping Exercises Due: Monday, January 29

Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*

Noel Ignatiev, "How to be a Race Traitor" (R)

David Theo Goldberg "Resisting Racisms, Eliminating Exclusions" (R)

Ruth Frankenberg, "White Women, Race Matters" (R)

Week 4: Race and Democracy

Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (entire)

Week 5: For Multicultural Democracy

Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Introduction, chs. 1 (pp.16-18, 33-49), 2 (pp.76-9), 3 (pp.80-90, 99-113), 4-5,

Week 6: For and Against Multicultural Democracy

Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, chs. 6 (179-85, 191-95), 7-9, & 11.
Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, (selections)

Week 7: Against Multicultural Democracy

Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, (selections)

Part IV: Diversity and the Law

Week 8: Liberal Dilemmas and Solutions

Martha Minnow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion and the Law* (selections) (R)
Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement* (selections) (R)

Week 9: Complex Federalism

James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*
or
Ayelet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights*

Part V: Democracy, Immigration and Equality

Week 10: The Contributions and Rights of Strangers

Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*
Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, selections (R)

Week 11: The Case for Liberal Assimilationism

Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Mistrust*

Week 12: Some Feminist Reservations

Susan Moller Okin, et. al., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*

Part VI: Democracy and Diversity Abroad

Week 13: Is Democracy Culturally Particular?

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (selections) (R)

Benjamin Barber, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy*, (selections) (R)

Week 14: Islam and Democracy

Khaled Abou El Fadl, et. al., *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (R)

Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* (R)

Roxanne Eubin, *Enemy in the Mirror* (R)

Week 15: A Jeremiad for American Democracy

Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*