

University of West Georgia
Fall 2009
POLS 4985 – Section 1
Liberty and Democracy
Meets: MW 02:00 – 03:15 pm, Pafford 107

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

What does it mean to be free? Free from what or whom? Free to do what? These are basic questions that need to be fully explored and debated in order to understand the concepts of liberty and democracy. At the heart of democracy are the proverbial “the people”, but do all people yearn to live in liberty? This course aims to introduce students to some of the fundamental questions that ancients and moderns have asked about liberty. At the end of the course students will be familiar with a variety of perspectives on liberty and American democracy. At this point they will be able to summarize, evaluate, and synthesize competing views on liberty, and will have gained a deeper understanding of the meaning of liberty and of Democracy in America.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: You cannot participate, contribute, and learn if you are not in class. Therefore, attendance is a requirement and students are allowed 2 absences ONLY. **Students who miss more than 2 lectures will incur a penalty worth 10% of their Final Grade.** Please be aware that we make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.

Participation: The structure of weekly class sessions will include a mixture of lectures, discussions, small group activities, and in-class debates. So please come to class prepared and ready to participate in whatever activities are planned for the session. **Class participation will be worth 20% of the Final Grade.** Participation entails writing 2 (two) 3-page summaries, attending class, joining in-class debates, and being prepared with questions and comments about the material.

Exams: There will be three take-home exams during the semester, **and there will be no make-up exams.**

Grade Calculation – Grades will be calculated as follows:

No.	Requirements	Page Count	Due Date	% Grade Value
1	Summaries (2)	3 each	TBA	20
2	First Exam	5	Friday, September 18	30
3	Second Exam	5	Friday, October 30	30
4	Final Exam	8	Friday, December 7	20

Please note that **NO curves** or adjustment of scores will be made. Extra credit will be awarded for attendance to

special events such as lectures, films, community events, etc.

Additional information about the exams, reading summaries, and other coursework will be discussed as the semester progresses.

REQUIRED TEXTS: (Available at the University Bookstore)

de Tocqueville, Alexis. [1835] 2006. [*Democracy in America*](#). George Lawrence, translator. Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Mill, John Stuart. [1859] 2006. [*On Liberty*](#). Dover Publications.

Sophocles. 2003. [*Antigone*](#). David Franklin and John Harrison, translators. Cambridge University Press.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION:

The only official method of communication via e-mail is through your campus e-mail account (MyUWG). Please do not send us email from other email clients (e.g. hotmail, yahoo, etc) because we will not answer email messages not communicated through MyUWG.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All assignments for this course must be your own original work. Research sources must be properly cited and acknowledged. The University of West Georgia has a Code of Academic Honor that will be followed in this course. Suspected violations of the Code will be subject to disciplinary action according to the University policy.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. Please turn off all electronic devices (cell phones, etc.) prior to entering class.
2. Please arrive on time.
3. Please do not read newspapers, sleep, or work on material for other courses during class.
4. Since we will deal with controversial issues, it is vital to the success of this class to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect. Thus, personal attacks will not be tolerated.
5. **Students who have learning disabilities or other documented issues should see Dr. Peralta immediately so that we can make appropriate arrangements to help them meet the course requirements.**

DISCLAIMER: No student can claim any rights based upon “perceived” omissions, ambiguities, vagueness or incompleteness contained in this syllabus. The instructors retain the right to amend this syllabus without prior notice.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- Aug. 10 – 14: Classes Begin
- Aug. 17 – 21: Introduction to the course and each other
Gaus, Gerald F. 2000. “What are Political Concepts?” *Political Concepts and Political Theories*. Westview Press, pp. 3-25.
Xenophon. [*Hiero or Tyrannicus*](#).
- Aug. 24 – 28: Sophocles. *Antigone*.
- Aug. 31 – Sep. 04: Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Chapters I and II
- Sep. 07 – 11: Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Chapters III and IV
Monday September 7, 2009 – Labor Day – No Class
- Sep. 14 – 18: Berlin, Isaiah. “Two Concepts of Liberty.”
Sidorsky, David. 2001. [“The Third Concept of Liberty and the Politics of Identity.”](#)
Partisan Review 68(4):
Friday, September 18, 2009 – First Exam Due
- Sep. 21 – 25: Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*.
Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 1
What is a Middle Class Democrat? Volume 1, Part 1, Chapters 2-5
The Americans and Race: Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 10
- Sep. 28 – Oct. 02: Influence of Democracy on Mores
Volume 2, Part 3, Chapters 1-7, 13-14
- Oct. 05 – 09: Democracy and Religion
Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 9
Volume 2, Part 1, Chapters 1-8
Tuesday, October 6, 2009 – Last day to withdraw with a grade of W
- Oct. 12 – 16: Democracy and Religion
Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 12-20
Fall Break October 15-16
- Oct. 19 – 23: The Americans and Women
Volume 2, Part 3, Chapters 8-12
- Oct. 26 – 30: Review
Friday, October 30, 2009 – Second Exam Due

- Nov. 02 – 06: A Contemporary Debate on Bioethics
Lawler, Peter Augustine. 2008. "[The Human Dignity Conspiracy.](#)" *The Intercollegiate Review*. Spring: 40-50.
Pinker, Steven. 2008. "The Stupidity of Dignity." *The New Republic*. 238(9): 28-31.
Thursday, November 5, 2009 – Guest Lecturer: Dr. Peter Augustine Lawler
- Nov. 09 – 13: Democratic Dangers
Volume 1, Part 2, Chapters 1-4, 7-8
Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 1-11
- Nov. 16 – 20: Equality, Liberty, and Democratic Despotism
Volume 2, Part 4, Chapters 1-8
- Nov. 23 – 27: Thanksgiving Recess – No Class November 25
- Nov. 30 – Dec. 04: Final Review and Overview
Wednesday, December 02, 2009 – Last day of MW classes
- FINAL EXAM Due by 4 pm on Monday, December 7, 2009**