

Democracy Core  
Winter: Democracy, Revolutions, and Constitutions

This course is devoted to the historical understanding of the emergence and fragility of democracy, probing sources of change and continuity—revolutionary rupture, constitutional stabilization, and counter-revolutionary reaction. Students will learn firsthand the diverse advantages offered by varied modes of inquiry in the social sciences as practiced by historians, sociologists, political scientists, and theorists of all stripes. We will engage with texts that lend themselves to multiple layers of analysis, including works of philosophy and theory as well as political manifestos, constitutions, and ephemeral arguments that emerged in political correspondence, speeches, or essays in periodicals.

The course is divided into three sections. A short introductory unit introduces students to classic accounts of the age of democratic revolution, including excerpts from the works of Alexis de Tocqueville and the classical work by R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*. In the second unit we turn our attention to primary sources from two sets of cases: the English Revolution of 1688-89 and the American Revolution; and the French and Haitian Revolutions. We will confront together the difficulty, contingency, and limits of the democratic achievement in this classic age of revolutions and consider whether constitution-making in these cases represented the consolidation of democratic achievement, the ending of the revolutionary moment, or a reaction against democratic impulses.

In the final section of the course we examine two twentieth-century cases – the Weimar Republic in Germany and Indian independence and the making of the Indian Constitution – to examine the challenges, achievements and dangers to democracy in an age of mass politics.

Assignments:

Students will write three papers of varying lengths, including a short (2-3 page) exercise in analytical reconstruction and a final 7-10 page paper drawing on primary sources to construct a historical argument on case of the student's choice. This final assignment will give students the opportunity to complete a circumscribed historical research project that requires them to make use of finding aids, bibliographical materials, as well as select print primary or archival material in the University's library.

The three papers may be supplemented with short weekly assignments to prepare students for class discussions.

Readings (NB: this reading list is only illustrative; the final syllabus will differ in detail).

Unit 1: Democratic Revolutions

Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, excerpts  
De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* and *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, excerpts

Unit 2a: The Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution

Selected documents from the *Glorious Revolution*

Locke, excerpts from *Second Treatise on Government*

The Declaration of Independence

Paine, *Common Sense*

The United States Constitution and the English Bill of Rights

Selections from the *Federalist Papers* and from Antifederalist letters and pamphlets

Unit 2b: The French and Haitian Revolutions

Hunt (ed.), *The French Revolution and Human Rights*, selections of primary sources

Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*

“Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”

Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Woman”

Garrigus and Dubois (eds.) *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, selections of primary sources

Unit 3: Weimar Germany and Indian Independence

Rosa Luxemburg, writings and speeches

The Weimar Constitution

B.R. Ambedkar, writings and speeches on the Indian constitution, democracy, and partition

Excerpts from the Constituent Assembly Debates in India