

Democracy Core  
Spring: The Challenge of Modern Democracies

The final quarter of the Democracy core grapples with the possibilities of, and challenges, to democratic government in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The readings sustain the concern for close textual analysis and historical inquiry established earlier in the sequence, but introduce systematic attention to the uses of comparison, both over time and across nations.

The quarter will begin with the debates over national self-determination and the possibility of democracy that proliferated in the decades from the First through the Second World War. Students will consider the normative case made for rights to self-determination (celebrated by figures such as Woodrow Wilson but recognized as a threat to class-based revolution by Rosa Luxemburg) as well as arguments by those skeptical of the possibility or desirability of a more inclusive and participatory democratic regime. Key readings for the first weeks of class will include arguments that identify the dangers in defining the *demos* or people in ways that enable despotism or even genocide.

John Dewey *The Public and Its Problems* or *Liberalism and Social Action*

Carl Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*

Despite these risks of democracy, democratic regimes multiplied and deepened in the decades after World War II. During the middle weeks of the quarter, we will address two dimensions of this democratic expansion: the development of the modern welfare state as a democratic response to capitalist economies and the diffusion of the democratic form globally. Both developments confronted the challenge of how to define the *demos* as abstract principles of equality confronted deeply entrenched understandings of difference and exclusion. Possible readings include:

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* or *The Constitution of Liberty*

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny* or “The American Abyss”

Atlantic Charter, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Nehru’s (1936) speech on moving beyond “the western pattern”

Selections representing modernization theory, the New Nations Project (e.g. Seymour Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and

Political Legitimacy” [1959]; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*; Robert Dahl on democracy).

Mary Dudziak, “Working Toward Democracy: Thurgood Marshall and the Constitution of Kenya,” *Duke Law Journal* 56, 3 (2006).

Martin Luther King, Jr. “The Ethical Demands of Integration,” pp. 117-125 & “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” pp. 289-302. Both in James M. Washington (ed). 1986. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots,” “The Ballot or the Bullet,” in *Malcolm X Speaks*, George Breitman, ed.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Plan (<http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm>),

Black Panther Party (Huey Newton), “In Defense of Self Defense” (<http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/bpp/bpp161168.htm>)

The final weeks of the quarter turn to the present and future of democratic politics. Readings consider the implications of resurgent ethnonationalism and varieties of populist politics as well as the erosion of key democratic institutions. This section will address contemporary cases of democratic backsliding and reconstruction. Possible readings include:

Desmond King and Patrick Le Galès (2017). “The three constituencies of the state: why the state has lost unifying energy,” *British Journal of Sociology* 68 (S1): 11-33.

Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*.

Sheri Berman, “Populism is Not Fascism: But It Could Be a Harbinger,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2016): 39-44.

Michael McQuarrie, “The revolt of the Rust Belt: place and politics in the age of anger,” *British Journal of Sociology* 68, S1 (2017): S121-S151.

Nancy Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, 1 (2016): 5-19.

Gurminder K. Bhambra, “The current crisis of Europe: Refugees, colonialism, and the limits of cosmopolitanism,” *European Law Journal* 23 (2017): 305-405.

John Markoff, “Democracy’s Past Transformations, Present Challenges and Future Prospects,” *International Journal of Sociology* 43, 2 (2013): 13-40.