

University of Chicago
Department of Political Science
Autumn 2023

**Democracy:
Equality, Liberty, and the Dilemmas of Self-Government I**
SOSC 18400

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Tuesday-Thursday 11am-12:20pm

Office Hours: TBD & by appt.
Pick Hall 422B

Course Description

How are democracies established and maintained? What are their advantages and disadvantages with respect to stability, security, liberty, equality, and justice? Why do democracies decline and die? This course addresses these questions by examining democracies, republics, and popular governments in ancient and medieval Europe. We will read and discuss primary texts from and social scientific analyses of Athenian democracy, the Roman Republic, and the Florentine commune.

Course Requirements

This is a seminar that requires intensive reading, discussion and writing. Each student is expected to: (1) keep up with all the readings; (2) participate actively and enthusiastically in class (the success or failure of the course rests upon your ability to discuss the material with each other and the instructor); (3) give a ten minute presentation on a specific portion of the readings; and (4) write two 7-10 page papers on a topic suggested or approved by the instructor. **Note: in-class use of electronic devices, including laptop computers, is strictly forbidden (with the exception of class presenters).**

Readings

Required books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-Op Book Store; other required readings are available online through Canvas (under "Files").

Eric Robinson, Ancient Greek Democracy: Readings and Sources (Wiley, 2003)

Livy, The Rise of Rome (Oxford, 2009)

M. Jurdjevic, N. Piano & J.P. McCormick, eds. Florentine Political Thought From Petrarch to Machiavelli (U. Penn, 2019)

Part I. Athenian Democracy

Tuesday, September 26.

Introduction.

Thursday, September 28.

Founding Athenian Democracy

Robinson, Ancient Greek Democracy, pp. 76-122.

(selections from Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Ober, et. al.)

Tuesday, October 3.

Principles of Athenian Democracy

Robinson, Ancient Greek Democracy, pp. 152-84.

(selections from Euripides, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Ostwald, & Hansen)

Thursday, October 5.

Class Conflict in Athens

Robinson, Ancient Greek Democracy, pp. 185-247.

(selections from Demosthenes, Thucydides, Ober, Rhodes & Wilson)

Tuesday, October 10.

Democratic Exclusion in Athens

Robinson, Ancient Greek Democracy, pp. 248-312.

(selections from Pseudo-Xenophon, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Aristotle, et. al.)

Demetra Kasimis, "Plato's Open Secret" (**canvas**).

Thursday, October 12.

Overthrowing Athenian Democracy

Sarah B. Pomeroy, et. al., Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History (Oxford, 2017, 4th Edition) 311-30 (**canvas**).

David A. Teegarden, Death to Tyrants!: Ancient Greek Democracy and the Struggle against Tyranny (Princeton), pp. 15-56 (**canvas**).

Part II. The Roman Republic

Tuesday, October 17.

Was Rome a Democratic or Oligarchic Republic?

John A. North, "The Constitution of the Roman Republic," pp. 256-275 (**canvas**).

Alexander Yakobson, "Popular Power in the Roman Republic," pp. 383-400 (**canvas**).

Thursday, October 19.

Brutus and the Founding of Republican Rome

Livy, The Rise of Rome, I.48-II.11, pp. 56-82.

Tuesday, October 24.

Class Conflict and the Plebeian Tribunes
Livy, The Rise of Rome, II.12-42, pp. 82-115.

Thursday, October 26.

The Failure of Agrarian Reform and the Crisis of the Republic
Plutarch, "The Life of Tiberius Gracchus"
(http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Tiberius_Gracchus*.html)

Tuesday, October 31.

Empire Abroad and Corruption at Home
Sallust, The War With Jugurtha
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Sallust/Bellum_Jugurthinum/1*.html

Thursday, November 2.

Civil War and the Establishment of the Principate
Plutarch, "The Life of Cicero"
(http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Cicero*.html)

*****Monday, November 6. First paper due at 12noon*****

Part III. The Florentine Commune**Tuesday, November 7.**

A Republic and a Constitution in Constant Flux
Leonardo Bruni, "On the Florentine Constitution," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 141-44;
Mark Jurdjevic, "Introduction," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 1-24;
Nicolai Rubinstein, "Florentine Constitutionalism and Medici Ascendancy," pp. 442-62
(**canvas**); and
Rubinstein, "Machiavelli and the Florentine Republican Experience," pp. 3-16 (**canvas**).

Thursday, November 9.

Civic Humanism and Florentine "Republicanism"
Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 105-34;
Bruni, "Oration for the Funeral of Nanni Strozzi," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 135-40.

Tuesday, November 14.

Republican Nostalgia Under Medici Rule
Alamanno Rinuccini, "Liberty," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 156-78.

Thursday, November 16.

Reforming and Usurping the Florentine Republic
Guicciardini, "On the Mode of Reordering the Popular Government," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 250-79;

Paolo Vettori, "Memorandum to Cardinal de' Medici About the Affairs of Florence," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 205-09.

Tuesday, November 28.

Reinstituting the Florentine Republic

Niccolò Machiavelli, "Discursus on Florentine Matters," Florentine Political Writings, pp. 213-22.

Thursday, November 30.

Concluding Discussion

*****Friday, December 9. Final Paper Due*****

Grading and Course Policies

Grading:

Participation 20%

Presentation 20%

Paper(s) 60%

Absences & Tardiness: This is a discussion-based class, and consequently it is essential that you be present. I will allow one unexcused absence, no explanation required, no questions asked. Any additional absences will be excused only with a doctor's note in the case of illness, or a note from your college advisor in the event of personal emergencies. Three unexcused absences equals an F in participation. Similarly, I will allow one unexcused tardy. Each additional tardy will result in an automatic deduction of your participation grade (i.e. from a B to a B-). Lateness of 20 minutes or more will count as an absence.

Late papers: Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one-third of a letter grade for each day late. I reserve the right to refuse to accept papers that are more than three days late, which in most cases would prevent you from passing the course. Extensions will be granted only in cases of illness (with a note from your doctor) or emergency (with a note from your college advisor).

Electronic Devices: I have a no-devices policy in this class. Phones must be turned off and kept out of sight at all times. No reading from, or taking notes on, tablets or laptops is permitted.

Academic Honesty: All papers you submit for this course must be your own original work (and not previously or simultaneously submitted for another course). Plagiarism takes various forms, and it can occur not just intentionally but also through carelessness about the attribution of others' ideas, or ignorance of proper citation practices. The following resources are helpful in explaining what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, and in providing guidelines for citation practices:

http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but_what_if_you_get_stuck.htm

<http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=297265&p=1984228>

When in doubt, cite your source! If you are unsure what constitutes (in)appropriate use of sources please get in touch with me and the teaching intern.

If you submit plagiarized material you will, at a minimum, receive an F on the assignment in question and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students. Further consequences are possible, including an F in the course, depending on the circumstances.

Accessibility: The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs, and I am committed to making this class accessible. If you have a disability that requires accommodation so that you can participate in class and complete assignments, please be in touch with me as soon as possible. You will need to provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter, which you can obtain from the Student Disability Services office. Disability Services is located at 5801 S. Ellis Avenue, and online at disabilities.uchicago.edu. You can contact them at 773-834-4469/TTY 773-795-1186 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.