

TEACHING DEMOCRACY

POLITICAL SCIENCE 4316: FALL 2018 CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

Instructor: Alena Wolfink

Class: MWF 12:00-12:50, Bizzini 115

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 11am-12pm, Bizzini 132-A

Email: awolfink@csustan.edu

This course engages various theoretical perspectives on the practices of democratic citizenship and pedagogy, both in the classroom and in social movements. We will explore the meanings of democracy and democratic citizenship by thinking systematically about the varieties of political membership and political action. We will ask, “What is democracy as a process, and what does it look like as an everyday practice? What distinguishes the two? How does citizenship as an abstract, universal category compare and contrast to citizenship as a particular relation to a specific community? Who decides the practical answers to questions such as these, and what can and ought we do with disagreements about them?” As we pursue these questions, we will also work on practical applications. Students will have the opportunity to choose to either work on the nuts and bolts of curriculum development and class design for teaching democracy and democratic citizenship at a chosen grade level, or to further develop a synthesis of political theoretical skills and political activism, using the example of the classroom as a way into deeper thinking about the relationship between democracy and hierarchy.

Learning Objectives

My objectives for student learning in this course include both knowledge and skills. By the end of the quarter, you will:

- Be familiar with the arguments and ideas presented in the readings, in lectures, and in classroom discussions.
- Understand some main theoretical debates around democracy, citizenship, and inclusive pedagogy and be familiar with examples from the political world to which the debates speak.
- Thoughtfully read complex texts and analyze arguments.
- Communicate your own ideas and arguments, verbally and in writing.

Requirements

I expect you to attend all class meetings, and to thoughtfully read all course materials. Your course grade will include the following components:

1. Participation (attendance, verbal engagement, and informal written work) – 20%
2. Reading quizzes (average of all but lowest score) – 20%
3. Two short papers (2-3 pages each) – 20% (10% each)
4. Lesson plan or community action – 40%

Extensions and incompletes are only for emergency cases. Contact me immediately – and in advance of any due dates – should urgent, unavoidable, and unforeseen circumstances interfere with your completion of the requirements.

Expectations

Readings:

The readings are the foundation of the course. Much of the reading is dense and difficult, and full of unfamiliar ideas. You must give sufficient time to actively **read and re-read** the materials slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. You should plan to spend a number of hours a week reading and re-reading the course materials and preparing for class discussion.

There are five required textbooks for this course. all of which can be purchased at the bookstore or found online:

Plato, *Gorgias*

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education*

Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*

Class Discussions:

Discussions provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion and analysis of the material. Attendance and participation is required, and you are expected to be an active and consistent contributor. You must come to class prepared to analyze and reflect on the readings—this means you must complete the assigned readings prior to class. Come to class on time and bring a copy of the readings with you.

You will be expected to raise questions related to the material, share perspectives on and interpretations of the readings and discussion topics, and engage in respectful and thoughtful debate.

Writing:

I take the responsibility of grading your work seriously, and will always strive to be fair and accurate in my evaluations. I will use the following standards for the evaluating written work in this course:

- A: Excellent work, with clear, challenging, original ideas supported by sufficient, appropriate, logically interpreted evidence. The essay should engage the reader in the inquiry, convincingly answer opposing views, be well organized, and free of significant flaws. An ‘A’ paper should be not just good but outstanding in ideas and presentation.
- B: Good to very good work, with a clear thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate evidence, organized and interpreted logically. The ‘B’ paper may have some outstanding qualities but be marked by significant flaws which keep it from being an ‘A’; or it may be all-around good work, free of major problems but lacking the deeper insight necessary for excellence.
- C: Satisfactory work, but not yet good. The ‘C’ paper meets the basic requirements of a thesis supported by interpretation of specific evidence, but it needs work in thinking and/or presentation. There may be a lack of clarity, the evidence may not always be sufficient and appropriate, or the interpretation may have logical flaws. The essay may have organizational or mechanical problems that keep it from being good. The ‘C’ paper may be good in some respects but poor in others, or it may simply be adequate but not noteworthy overall.
- D: Barely passing work that shows effort but is so marred by serious problems that it cannot be considered a satisfactory paper.
- F: Failing work—for example, a hasty, sloppy paper that shows little or no thought, effort, or familiarity with the text.

Some Classroom Practices and Policies

- Your curiosity and participation are essential to your learning success in this course. Please feel free to raise your hand during lectures if you have a question—every question brings something of value to the class.
- Bring your readings to every class.
- I have a strict **no internet** policy in my classrooms (computers, tablets, etc). The evidence is conclusive that use of the internet in the classroom inhibits student focus and learning, both for the student using the device and for others nearby.
- If you require accommodations because of a disability, please submit necessary paperwork from the Disability Resource Services office to me ASAP.
- Be on time. Do not leave midway through class except in emergency cases.

Note: Any form of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will be met with a failing grade and referral to the university for further discipline.

Reading Schedule

Aug 22

Introduction

Aug 24, 27

bell hooks, "Introduction" and "Engaged Pedagogy" in *Teaching to Transgress*

No class Aug 29 & 31 (I'm away at a conference.)

Sept 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, & 17

Plato, *Gorgias*

Sept 19, 21, 24, 26, 28, Oct 1

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

Oct 3

Berila, "Contemplating the Effects of Oppression: Integrating Mindfulness into Diversity Classrooms"

Oct 5, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education*

No class Oct 19 (I'm away at a conference.)

Oct 24, 26

Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation"
Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public"

Oct 29, 31, Nov 2, 5, 7, 9

Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Nov 14, 16, 19, 21, 26, 28, 30

Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*

Dec 3, 5, 7

Student Presentations

Dec 10

Wrap-up, course evaluations