

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Code / Title : HA4013 Advanced Topics in Democratic Theory: Democracy & Division

Pre-requisites : HA1002

No. of AUs. : 4

Contact Hours : 52

Course Aims

This course will provide advanced undergraduate students with a theoretical interrogation of the concept of democracy, particularly as it relates to the issue of social division. Throughout the history of political thought, theorists from Plato to John Rawls have recognized that division is the essence of the sphere of politics: divisions continually emerge between different parts of the political community, between those who claim different titles to govern, those with differing desires and needs, those with opposing visions of the common good, and so on. With few exceptions, however, the tradition's canonical thinkers have seen this plurality as a condition that needs to be overcome, not as one to be affirmed. In this course we will study a variety of twentieth-century political theorists who have not only recognized the fact of human difference, but who argue that the realization of democracy depends upon precisely the affirmation of this difference. Democracy is thus essentially related to the effort to give an expression to the multiplicity of social forms of doing, being, and thinking that internally differentiate all political societies. Students will be encouraged to contrast this understanding of democracy with those contemporary ones that emphasize the values of social harmony and consensus, providing them with a ground to critically probe actually existing political institutions and orders.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Identify the key conceptual material regarding the essence of democracy as formulated by the thinkers studied.
2. Situate this conceptual material within the larger tradition of political thought, and recognize how it builds upon and criticizes earlier political theory.
3. Apply this theoretical knowledge to the practical analysis of contemporary debates regarding the topics of democracy and pluralism in modern societies.
4. Analyze and interpret complex textual material related to political science.
5. Present your opinions on various political concepts in a coherent and logical way.

Course Content

Week 1 - Introduction and Overview

Week 2 - Hannah Arendt: The Meaning of Revolution

Week 3 - Hannah Arendt: The Revolutionary Council Tradition

Week 4 - Pierre Clastres: Toward a New Political Anthropology

Week 5 - Pierre Clastres: Society against the State

Week 6 - Claude Lefort: The Critique of Totalitarianism

Week 7 - Claude Lefort: Democracy and the Empty Place of Power
Week 8 - Cornelius Castoriadis:
The Radical Imaginary

Week 9 - Cornelius Castoriadis: Democracy and Autonomy

Week 10 - Jacques Ranciere: The Equality of Intelligences

Week 11 - Jacques Ranciere: Democracy and Dissensus

Week 12 - Miguel Abensour: Democracy against the State

Week 13 - Student Presentations

Course Assessment

Class Participation : 10%

Critical Reading responses : 20%

Short Essay : 30%

Major Essay : 40%

Total -----

100%