

**Elections, Lottocracy, and the Challenges of 21st Century Democracy:  
Ignorance, Identity, Inequality**

Seminar in Social & Political Philosophy: 16:730:583

Spring 2020, Mondays: 1:10-4:10pm

Rutgers University – New Brunswick, 106 Somerset Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Seminar Room

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This course will consider three central challenges for democratic political systems in the modern world. Understanding and addressing these challenges is essential for preserving what is good about democracy, and for preserving much of what is good in this world, given how much of the world is affected by the decisions and operations of democratic governments. The course will consider several institutional responses to these concerns, including my own arguments on behalf of lottocratic institutions.

The first challenge we will consider is the challenge from ignorance. We will look at empirical work on political knowledge and information, as well as on topics within so-called “political epistemology.” These include philosophical work on education, misinformation and epistemic manipulation, rational voter ignorance, the appropriate role of experts, reliance on and trust in the testimony of co-citizens, the implications of standpoint epistemology, the efficacy of using heuristics and retrospective voting to hold elected officials accountable, the creation and protection of oppositional and independent journalism, and much else.

The second challenge we will consider is the challenge from so-called identity politics. We will focus on understanding the role that political identity and political division plays in modern politics, as well as the role that historical and current racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, xenophobia, and other fault lines of injustice play in the formation of these identities and divisions. We will consider topics such as the creation, sustenance, and importance of political community; the concepts of representation, accountability, authenticity, and constituency; the role of voting and election rules in creating and structuring political parties and political engagement; the significance of, and appropriate responses to, political disagreement; and we will return again to the implications of standpoint epistemology.

The third challenge we will consider is the challenge from inequality. We will consider the ways in which various kinds of inequality—economic, social, and educational—undermine core features that might make democratic government normatively attractive, as well as exacerbating the problems of ignorance and identity politics. We will focus on the difficulty of realizing the core values of democracy through systems of electoral representative government in conditions of significant inequality. These difficulties stem from the role that economic and social resources play in determining who can be a viable candidate, what issues get electoral attention, and who is able to influence public views on political matters; the value of lobbying in conditions of ignorance and division; the ease of capture in the face of policy complexity; and the difficulty of eliminating the effects of inequality given commitments to freedom of speech and political influence.

We will consider a variety of responses to these concerns, including use of consociational mechanisms, proportional representation systems, regulation of campaign finance, public financing of campaigns, term limits, regulation of lobbying and revolving doors, wealth and inheritance taxes, general anti-capitalist measures, public control of political media, and improvements in the structure of public financing of education. We will also consider, somewhat more extensively, the potential of sortition and what I call “lottocratic” political systems to address the three challenges discussed in the first parts of the course.

We will read empirical political science, law, sociology, and economics, as well as a variety of philosophical work. We will also read substantial parts of the manuscript for my forthcoming book.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### I. TALKING

(A) Come to class, be on time, be prepared, talk regularly and about as much as is compatible with everyone else also speaking that much. **(15% of grade)**

(B) In addition to that, each person taking the class for credit will be required to be a “commentator” on one of the readings for one of the meetings of the course. This role should be treated as if you were serving as a commentator for a conference (like one of the American Philosophical Association conferences) and you have been assigned a paper on which to comment. **(15% of grade)**

You will have no more than 7 minutes total for your comments and you will be expected to make a handout.

You need only offer as much description and summary as is necessary to understand your critical points (which might be focused entirely on one part of one argument), and you should see your role as offering critical commentary on an argument or claim made by the author of the relevant reading.

You will need to practice giving your comments so that they can fit in the allotted time, and you will need to meet with me and send me your handout at least one day in advance of the course meeting at which you will offer your comments.

### II. WRITING

**Undergraduates** have two options:

Option One: (a) 2000-2500 word paper, due 3/30 **(30% of grade)**

(b) 2500-3000 word paper, due 5/4 **(40% of grade)**

Option Two: 7000-7500 word paper, due 5/11 **(70% of grade)**

**Graduate students** have one option:

7000-7500 word paper, due 5/18 **(70% of grade)**

Details will be provided in class.

#### **Accessibility**

I want this class to be a great and educational experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers. Students with disabilities are encouraged to speak with me and/or to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services if that would be helpful: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

#### **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

[https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI\\_Policy\\_2013.pdf](https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf)

**PLAN FOR COURSE AND READINGS**

<b>I. Introduction to Democracy and Political Philosophy</b>		
1/27	<b>Introduction: Democracy and Political Philosophy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iris Marion Young, “Democracy and Justice” (Chapter One, pp. 16-51, of <u>Inclusion and Democracy</u>)</li> <li>▪ Jon Elster, “The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory”</li> <li>▪ Gordon Graham, “What is Special About Democracy?” <u>Mind</u></li> </ul>
2/3	<b>Ideal/Non-Ideal Theory and Political Functionalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.A. Guerrero, C1: How to Evaluate Political Institutions</li> <li>▪ Charles Mills, “Ideal Theory” as Ideology</li> </ul>
<b>II. Ignorance</b>		
2/10	<b>Elections and Ignorance: The Influence/No Influence Dilemma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A. Guerrero, C2: Elections, Ignorance, and the Influence Dilemma</li> <li>▪ Ilya Somin, excerpts from <u>Democracy and Political Ignorance</u></li> <li>▪ Jason Brennan, excerpts from <u>Against Democracy</u></li> <li>▪ C. Achen &amp; L. Bartels, excerpts from <u>Democracy for Realists</u></li> </ul>
2/17	<b>Elections and Information: Democracy and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ John Dewey, excerpts from <u>The Public and Its Problems</u></li> <li>▪ Marie Collins Swabey, “Publicity and Measurement”</li> <li>▪ Walter Lippmann, excerpts from <u>Public Opinion</u></li> <li>▪ Neil Postman, excerpts from <u>Amusing Ourselves to Death</u></li> </ul>
2/24	<b>Elections and Information: Media, News, Entertainment, Markets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regina Rini, “Fake News and Partisan Epistemology”</li> <li>▪ C. Thi Nguyen, “Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles”</li> <li>▪ Gregory J. Martin and Ali Yurukoglu, “Bias in Cable News: Persuasion and Polarization,” <u>American Economic Review</u></li> <li>Penelope Muse Abernathy, “The Expanding News Desert” (2018)</li> <li>▪ Doris Graber &amp; Johanna Dunaway, excerpts from <u>Mass Media and American Politics</u></li> <li>▪ Shanto Iyengar &amp; Donald Kinder, excerpts and epilogue from <u>News That Matters: Television and American Opinion</u></li> </ul>

### III. Identity and Inequality

3/2	<p><b>Elections and Psychological Pathology:</b> Short-termism, Attention and Distraction, Emotional Manipulation, Interest Dynamics, In-Group/Out-Group, Personalities not Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C3: Electoral Psychology, Electoral Pathology</li> <li>▪Rachel Barkow, excerpts from <u>Prisoners of Politics: Breaking the Cycle of Mass Incarceration</u> (2019), pp. 105-138</li> <li>▪Lilliana Mason, excerpts from <u>Uncivil Agreement</u></li> <li>▪Shanto Inyengar &amp; Masha Krupenkin, “The Strengthening of Partisan Affect,” <u>Political Psychology</u> (2018)</li> <li>▪Joseph Marks et al., “Epistemic spillovers: Learning others’ political views reduces the ability to assess and use their expertise in nonpolitical domains,” <u>Cognition</u> (2019)</li> <li>▪Drew Westen, excerpts from <u>The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation</u></li> <li>▪C. Achen and Larry Bartels, excerpts from <u>Democracy for Realists</u></li> <li>▪Diana Mutz, excerpts from <u>Hearing the Other Side</u></li> </ul>
3/9	<p><b>Elections and Unrepresentative Representatives:</b> What they know, what they care about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Membership of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Profile</li> <li>▪Nancy Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”</li> <li>▪Sandra Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is Strong Objectivity?” in <i>Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader</i></li> <li>▪Patricia Hill Collins, “Comment on Hekman’s ‘Truth and Method’: Where’s the Power?”</li> <li>▪Alison Wylie, “Why Standpoint Matters”</li> <li>▪Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”</li> </ul>
3/23	<p><b>Elections and Unrepresentative Representatives:</b> Who they are, what they represent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero C4: Elections &amp; Unrepresentative Representatives</li> <li>▪Lani Guinier, “Groups, Representation, and Race Conscious Districting: A Case of the Emperor’s New Clothes” in <u>The Tyranny of the Majority</u></li> <li>▪Lani Guinier, “The Triumph of Tokenism: The Voting Rights Act and the Theory of Black Electoral Success” in <u>The Tyranny of the Majority</u></li> <li>▪K. Anthony Appiah, excerpts <u>The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity</u></li> <li>▪David Canon, excerpts from <u>Race, Redistricting, and Representation</u>, pp. 20-59, 201-264</li> </ul>

3/30	<b>Elections and Inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C5: Elections, Elites, and Inequality</li> <li>▪Jacob Hacker &amp; Paul Pierson, excerpts from <u>Winner-Take-All Politics</u>, pp. 1-72</li> <li>▪Pamela Karlan &amp; Samuel Issacharoff, “The Hydraulics of Campaign Finance Reform”</li> <li>▪Rick Hasen, excerpts from <u>Plutocrats United</u></li> <li>▪Martin Gilens, excerpts from <u>Affluence and Influence</u></li> </ul>
<b>IV. Lottocracy</b>		
4/6	<b>The Lottocratic Alternative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C6: Modest Reforms and Their Limitations</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C7: Sortition</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C8: Single-Issue Legislative Bodies</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C9: The Lottocratic Alternative</li> <li>▪Mark Warren &amp; Hilary Pearse, “Introduction: Democratic Renewal and Deliberative Democracy,” in <u>Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly</u></li> <li>▪Oliver Dowlen, excerpts from <u>The Political Potential of Sortition</u></li> <li>▪Catherine Fearon, “National Minority participation: lessons for developed democracies from less developed democracies?”</li> <li>▪Paul Rosenberg, “From ancient Athens to the town hall: Can a new wave of deliberative democracy save the world?” Salon (2019)</li> <li>▪Patrick Chalmers, “How 99 Strangers in a Dublin hotel broke Ireland's abortion deadlock,” The Guardian (March 8, 2018)</li> </ul>
4/13	<b>Lottocracy and Ignorance: Learning, Expertise, Single Issue Focus, Competence, Standpoint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C10: Overcoming Ignorance: Learning, Competence, Expertise</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C11: Overcoming Ignorance: Microcosm Representation and Standpoint Epistemology</li> <li>▪Jennifer Roberts et al., “Experts and evidence in deliberation: scrutinising the role of witnesses and evidence in mini-publics, a case study” (2020)</li> </ul>

4/20	<b>Lottocracy and Identity: Psychology and Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C12: Lottocratic Identities, Avoiding Pathologies</li> </ul>
4/27	<b>Lottocracy, Equality, and Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C13: Lottocratic Selection and Avoiding Capture</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C14: Lottocracy and Political Equality</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C15: Participation and Accountability under Lottocracy</li> <li>▪Stephen Hawkins et al., “Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape” (2018)</li> </ul>
5/4	<b>Lottocracy in Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C16: Objections, Concerns, Obstacles</li> <li>▪A. Guerrero, C17: Transition and Experimentation</li> </ul>