

L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Dr. Paul R. Carr

Sociology 3113 WAO - Sociology of Democracy

Winter 2011

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Paul R. Carr
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1. Course Description

This is a special issue course that examine the sociology of democracy. We will examine theoretical, conceptual and empirical notions of the conceptualization, application and essence of democracy.

2. Course Focus

We will focus on the meaning of democracy with Canadian society, making the linkage with manifestations of democracy in other contexts. Are we democratic? How do we know if we are? Can there be democracy within societies with that have visible, explicit and nefarious social inequalities, including racism, sexism, poverty, homelessness, etc.? Are citizens aware of the governments' involving in the perpetuation of war, militarization, and conflict, and how is this connected to democracy? Are elections the central feature to democracy, and if so what is the role of the citizen outside electoral processes? What is the connection to education in cultivating a critical, engaged, participatory citizenry? We will critically examine these questions within the

perspective of how power functions within society. Significantly, students will interrogate not only how democracy works but, also, how alternative versions of the hegemonic normative narrative can be challenged to seek different forms of critical engagement.

3. Required Texts

There are two required textbooks for this course:

Paul R. Carr. (2011). *Does your vote count? Critical pedagogy and democracy*. New York: Peter Lang.

ISBN: 978-1-4331-0812-9

Terrence Ball, Richard Dagger, William Christian, & Colin Campbell. (2010). *Political ideologies and the democratic ideal*. Toronto: Pearson Canada.

ISBN: 978-90-8790-142-4

4. Course format

This course includes two fundamental texts, which will involve a manageable amount of conceptual, theoretical and applied readings, laying the groundwork for in-depth discussion and analysis of the sociology of democracy. In addition, we will watch a number of films to provide a range of voices and vantage-points to inform our thinking. The first part of the course will involve a fair amount of reading in order to adequately and effectively situate our focus on the sociology of democracy. Progressively, we will seek to engage one another in critical dialog and debate, and students are encouraged to bring issues, thoughts and questions to the class, both in person and electronically. We will maintain discussions electronically through WebCT, and, for the most part, all assignments, communications and evaluations will take place through the WebCT portal. The instructor will lead discussions, make some presentations, and frame structured debate. The overall objective is critical engagement, and, for this to happen, students should immerse themselves in the readings and the assignments knowing that our personal experiences, identities, realities, ideologies and positionality all contribute to what we know. Therefore, we should be open to new learning, and, importantly, how we construct our own knowledge. Questions of all kinds are welcome. There will be ample opportunity for discussion and clarification of issues, which will become increasingly complexified and problematized as we advance in the course.

5. Academic Guidelines

- a. A fundamental principle for the teaching and learning in this course is the free and open exchange of ideas in a climate of mutual respect, reinforcing an academic environment in

which we can expand our horizons at the individual and collective levels.

- b. There is a penalty for assignments handed in late unless appropriate arrangements and/or documentation (i.e., medical notes) are provided.
- c. Written assignments must be formatted according to the ASA (American Sociological Association) Style Guide for referencing and citations. For more information, see the Department of Sociology webpage at <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca/index.php> or the this website at <http://www.queensu.ca/sociology/files/styleguiderevised%20NOV06.pdf>
- d. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to the University regulations. For more information, see University Regulations section “IX Academic Dishonesty,” Lakehead University Calendar 10/11: <http://calendar.lakeheadu.ca/current/contents/regulations/univregsIXacdishon.html>
- e. Diversity and equity are concepts of central importance within an academic context, and we should be cognizant of the experiences, approaches and presence of our colleagues. Everyone should be made to feel comfortable in our classroom.
- f. Attendance in class, preparation to discuss readings and assignments, submitting work on time, and following the structure and rhythm of the class are the responsibility of students.
- g. The readings for this course are extremely important, and will assist students greatly as they undertake the required assignments and prepare for the final exam.
- h. Being able to write clearly, in good English, in a structure and style that is both effective and easy to follow, is important for this course. Students are encouraged to re-read and re-work their assignments before submitting them. The Instructor’s website contains a summary of points that will assist in writing an effective paper. There are University resources available for those in need of assistance with writing.
- i. In accordance with University procedures, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You must be registered with the appropriate University service.
- j. The instructor will be available at designated times, before and after class, and through the WebCT portal. Arrangements will be made for telephone contact. This syllabus is purposely detailed so as to provide a clear guide to where we are headed, what is expected, and how assignments will be evaluated.

- k. In order to facilitate a respectful, constructive and conducive learning environment, students are asked to turn off all electronic devices during class time.

6. ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. [ASSIGNMENT A – 15%] – Group Presentation (Ball text)

Approximately 20-minute Group Presentations (two per group, depending on the size of the class) on one of the following chapters from a critical vantage-point.

Ball text:

- a) Liberalism (pp. 37-54)
- b) Liberalism (pp. 55-72)
- c) Conservatism (pp. 77-91)
- d) Conservatism (pp. 92-110)
- e) Early Socialism and Communism (pp. 115- 132)
- f) Socialism and Communism after Marx (pp. 136-165)
- g) Fascism (pp. 182-198)

Students will provide the class with a maximum 2-page outline of the presentation, which will include the names of the presenters, the title, the key issues and a critical analysis of the topic, and also present a 20-minute oral presentation, which can include Powerpoint, and one or two short video-clips. Students are encouraged to be creative, to build on the readings and discussions in class, and address issues in an innovative matter. Working as a team, in an equitable, reasonable and effective manner, students are asked to consider what their colleagues would like to know about the topic presented, which should go beyond surface information. As there is not a lot of time for the presentation, due consideration should also be given to the most effective and enticing way to communicate the information. Avoid reading Powerpoint slides, and seek critical engagement and analysis.

As this is a group-assignment, it is imperative that students find the time to constructively work together, and also to craft a series of concepts, ideas and analysis that will coherently address the chapter selected. Work should be divided up evenly, and every possible effort should be made to discuss issues in a respectful and engaging manner. This assignment attempts to put into practice the first step to transformational change, involving diverse people in a common project to ascertain how best to achieve a common goal. It will be important to map out a comprehensive plan for presenting the presentation, and, then, in a disciplined manner, proceed with the required work.

Evaluation

- a) Clarity of the material presented -----3

| | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| b) | Critical analysis and inquiry ----- | 6 |
| c) | Engagement ----- | 3 |
| d) | Effectiveness in communicating material ----- | 3 |
| | | TOTAL →15 |

2. [ASSIGNMENT B – 15%] – Written Assignment

Written assignment: Examine the role of ideology and epistemology in relation to democracy. Students should critically examine what democracy is, based on their reflections, readings, discussions and course content, including the films we will be watching, articulating a critical interpretation of how ideology and epistemology are connected to democracy. The paper should be no more than 1500 words, double-spaced, Times Roman, size 12 font, and be submitted to the Instructor via WebCT as both an attachment and embedded within the body of the message.

Evaluation

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------|
| a) | Structure and organization ----- | 2 |
| b) | Writing and communication ----- | 2 |
| c) | Content ----- | 4 |
| d) | Analysis ----- | 4 |
| e) | Discussion ----- | 3 |
| | | TOTAL →15 |

3. [ASSIGNMENT D – 15%] – Group Presentation (Carr text)

As per the course schedule, students will work in groups of 2 (depending on the size of the class) to present a chapter in the Carr text. Students will provide the class with a maximum 2-page outline of the presentation, which will include the names of the presenters, the title, the key issues and a critical analysis of the topic, and also present a 20-minute oral presentation, which can include Powerpoint, and one or two short video-clips. Students are encouraged to be creative, to build on the readings and discussions in class, and address issues in an innovative matter. Working as a team, in an equitable, reasonable and effective manner, students are asked to consider what their colleagues would like to know about the topic presented, which should go beyond surface information. As there is not a lot of time for the presentation, due consideration should also be given to the most effective and enticing way to communicate the information. Avoid reading Powerpoint slides, and seek critical engagement and analysis.

As this is a group-assignment, it is imperative that students find the time to constructively work together, and also to craft a series of concepts, ideas and analysis that will coherently address the chapter selected. Work should be divided up evenly, and every possible effort should be made to discuss issues in a respectful and engaging manner.

As all students will be reading this book, attempt to make linkages with the various components contained therein, and also to cognizant of the related material that we're covering in class. Develop a critical analysis that includes examples, and also illustrates the meaning of the concepts covered.

Students can select from the following chapters:

Chapter 9. Whiteness and Race Challenging Democracy

Chapter 10. The Election of an African-American President: Does This Mean Democracy Is Working?

Chapter 11. The Media, Media Literacy and Democratic Education

Chapter 12. "Shocked and Awed" Into and Out of Democracy: Can There Be War and Democracy Simultaneously?

Chapter 13. "But What Can I Do?"

Chapter 14 .Conclusion: Some Thoughts on, and Options for, a Critical Pedagogy of Democracy

Evaluation

| | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| e) | Clarity of the material presented ----- | 3 |
| f) | Critical analysis and inquiry ----- | 6 |
| g) | Engagement ----- | 4 |
| h) | Effectiveness in communicating material ----- | 2 |
| | | TOTAL →15 |

5. [ASSIGNMENT D – 30%] – Written Assignment

Written assignment: Write a 2000-word paper on a subject of your choice related to democracy (there is a lot of flexibility within this topic to shape something of interest).

The essay will require intensive library research on an issue in the sociology of democracy literature (there are many journals dealing with strands of this area within political science, cultural studies, education, philosophy, and other areas).

Components:

- separate title page with title, name, course name and number, date, and total WORD COUNT;
- Essay length should be **2500** words, which includes references, notes, etc.;
- Paginate;
- Include in-text citations and a reference list in **ASA style**. Citations must be correctly formatted.
- Students may refer to course readings and others beyond the course. Refer to as many sources as required to adequately explore the various dimensions of your chosen topic. No quantity of references is specified.
- Students are expected to cite from a wide range of **sources** including books, scholarly journals,

research reports (eg. from teachers' federations and/or public policy organizations; see list of sites and links below), government documents, archive collections, and *reputable* electronic sources. (This excludes commercial sites, Wikipedia, blogs, forums, and other personal electronic sources.) Students are absolutely expected to use electronic indexes and databases, especially **ERIC** and **Sociological Abstracts**. Refer to LU library sources, the Department of Sociology website, and the Instructor website in addition to the following site for access to resources: <http://atoz.ebsco.com/titles.asp?Id=1790&sid=172046557&TabID=2>

- These expectations will serve as **evaluation** criteria for essays in addition to all of the conventional standards for effective essay-writing in sociology, ie. thesis statement, an effective introduction and conclusion, well-formulated arguments, critical analysis, and research effort.

Evaluation

| | | |
|---------|----------------------------------|----|
| a) | Structure and organization ----- | 3 |
| b) | Writing and communication ----- | 4 |
| c) | Content ----- | 6 |
| d) | Analysis ----- | 8 |
| e) | Discussion ----- | 6 |
| f) | Pertinence of references ----- | 3 |
| TOTAL → | | 30 |

6. [PARTICIPATION & WebCT Postings – 25%]

In-class participation, preparation, leading discussions, when required, and WebCT postings/discussion constitute participation in this course.

Students should do all of the required readings, and come to class prepared to discuss issues as well as raising concerns and questions.

Students will also be asked to lead a short discussion based on a 5-7 minute overview that they will provide to the class. This is not a formal presentation but, rather, a discussion that students will present and lead. This will be discussed in class, and students will be asked to find a current event, newspaper article or media topic related to democracy, which they could present in a critical way.

The final component for participation is the WebCT postings. The postings of roughly 150-200 words each should contain a couple of well-written paragraphs as well as two or three critical comments/observations; students should also engage others with questions about what others have said. The goal is to be original, innovative and pertinent, and to highlight areas of interest and concern in an engaging way. In other words, in attempting to be critical, the objective is not to simply regurgitate what the authors or others have said but to somehow link this to our diverse socio-political and education context. Students are also invited to comments on the postings of their colleagues, to engage in critical dialogue with them, and to use WebCT as a vehicle to better understand the issues discussed in class. Typically, students should comment on, at least

once, on the postings of their colleagues. WebCT will be used as a communication-tool for the course, and students are encouraged to work together on assignments, where appropriate, through this mechanism. For the purposes of this course, WebCT will serve as an important vehicle in which we can discuss course readings and the films that we will be watching.

Evaluation

- a) Consistency of participation -----6
 - b) Pertinence of participation -----10
 - c) Critical engagement -----9
- TOTAL → 25

OVERVIEW of the GRADING

- ASSIGNMENT A -----15 →Week 4
- ASSIGNMENT B -----15 →Week 6
- ASSIGNMENT C -----15 →Week 9
- ASSIGNMENT D -----30 →Weeks 12
- PARTICIPATION -----25 →Continuous

TOTAL →100

7.COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

| WEEK | CONTEXT & READINGS | ASSIGNMENTS |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | <i>STARTING-POINT</i> a) Introductions; b) Starting a new course; c) Some thoughts on critical thinking; d) Reviewing the syllabus; e) Contextualizing the sociology of democracy; f) Looking at resources; g) Video-clips FILM: Hacking Democracy → http://www.hackingdemocracy.com/ | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film |
| 2 | <i>IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS</i> +BALL (Chapter 1, Chapter 2) FILM: Capitalism: A Love Story → http://www.michaelmoore.com/books-films/capitalism-love-story | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between ideology and democracy? |
| 3 | <i>CRITICAL PEDAGOGY OF DEMOCRACY</i> +CARR (Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3 + FOREWORD) FILM: End of Poverty (2010) → http://www.theendofpoverty.com/theaters.php | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the critical pedagogy of democracy? |

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|----|---|---|
| 4 | <i>POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND DEMOCRACY</i> Student presentations (ASSIGNMENT A) | ASSIGNMENT A |
| 5 | <i>DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL LITERACY</i> +CARR (Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6) FILM: Beyond Elections: Redefining Democracy in the Americas (2008) → http://www.beyondelections.com/ | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between political literacy and democracy? |
| 6 | <i>EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY</i> +CARR (Chapter 7, Chapter 8) FILM: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (2010) → http://www.politicalmediareview.org/2010/08/the-rise-of-disaster-capitalism/ | ASSIGNMENT B due WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between education and democracy? |
| 7 | <i>IDENTITY POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY</i> +BALL (Chapter 10) The Take (2004) → http://www.thetake.org/ | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between identity and democracy? |
| 8 | <i>ECOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY</i> +BALL (Chapter 11) FILM: Arundhati Roy: Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (2008) → http://lisa.revues.org/index1710.html | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between ecology and democracy? |
| 9 | <i>THE SALIENCE OF DEMOCRACY IN OUR SOCIETY</i> Student presentations (ASSIGNMENT C) | ASSIGNMENT C |
| 10 | <i>ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY</i> +BALL (Chapter 12) FILM: Noam Chomsky: Crisis and Hope (2010) → http://www.amazon.ca/Chomsky-Noam-Crisis-Amy-Goodman/dp/B00347ZZ3S/ref=sr_1_45?s=dvd&ie=UTF8&qid=1290272147&sr=1-45 | WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + what are you thinking about the linkage between religion and democracy? |
| 11 | <i>STUDENT ISSUES – BRIEF (INDIVIDUAL) PRESENTATIONS</i> Student issues: Each student is to prepare an informal 5-7 minute presentation on a newspaper article, mainstream issues, commonly-held view, or some media topic related to democracy. The presentation should briefly outline why it is an issue, and then | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | critically analyze how it is understood within different lenses and by different groups, especially in relation to what we have learned concerning ideology, power and epistemology. | |
| 12 | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>SHAPING A NEW DEMOCRACY</i></p> <p>+CARR (last two chapters + AFTERWORD)</p> <p>FILM: South of the Border (2010) → http://southoftheborderdoc.com/</p> | <p>ASSIGNMENT D</p> <p>WebCT posting: Reflection on the film + any last thoughts: what do you think about democracy now?</p> |