

## **Philosophy 446**

### **Issues in Contemporary Political Philosophy: The Microcircuitry of Democracy**

**Tuesday 6 – 9, Arts 150.**

**Instructor : Daniel Weinstock**

**3690 Peel, office 201.**

**Office hours: Thursdays, 9:30 – 11:30, or by appointment.**

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### **Course Objectives**

The aim of this course is to look into the philosophical issues that arise in the design choices that go into making a democratic electoral system. Political philosophers have tended to neglect these questions, assuming that any democratic system will encompass some form of “majority rule”. But majority rule can be institutionalized in a wide range of ways. To begin with, there exist in actually existing democracies a number of electoral systems that organize the vote in radically different ways. These different electoral systems are grounded in different ways of construing and of ranking different democratic values, and they yield quite different consequences. What’s more, electoral systems are not just about which mode of election to select, but also about a wide range of other questions: who should get to vote? Should voting be mandatory? Should everyone vote on the same day? Are political parties necessary ingredients of electoral democracy, and if so, how should they be internally organized? And so on. Though they are eminently practical, each of these questions raises important philosophical issues that go to the heart of our very conception of what democracy and democratic community are. The goal of this course is to start to get some clarity on the issues raised by these design choices.

### **Course Outline**

#### **Week 1 Syllabus**

#### **Week 2 Preliminaries**

John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 1 – 2.

Daniel Weinstock, “Elections” in R. Bellamy and J. King (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Constitutional Theory*

Daniel Weinstock, “The Complex Normative Landscape of Electoral Systems”, in P. Loewen, A. Potter and D. Weinstock (eds.), *Should We Change How We Vote?*

#### **Weeks 3 – 4 The Philosophy of Electoral Systems**

Readings: Michael Dummett, *Principles of Electoral Reform*.

#### **Week 5 How should electoral constituencies be formed?**

Andrew Rehfeld, *The Concept of Constituency*, chs. 2, 9.

Thomas Pogge, “Self-Constituting Constituencies to Enhance Freedom, Equality, and Participation in Democratic Theories”, in *Theoria*, no. 99 (2002), pp. 26 – 54.

Marcus Carlson Häggrot, « Geographic Legislative Constituencies : A Defence », vol. 26, no. 5 (2023), pp. 301 – 330.

### **Week 6 Should Voting be Mandatory?**

Jason Brennan and Lisa Hill, *Compulsory Voting: For and Against* (excerpts).

### **Week 7 Who Should Vote? The Case of Children**

Daniel Weinstock, “What’s so Funny About Voting Rights for Children?”, in *Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy*, vol. 18 (2020)

Anca Gheaus, “Let Them Be Children’ Age Limits in Voting and Conceptions of Childhood”, in G. Bognar and A. Gosseries (eds.), *Aging without Ageism?*

Dana Kay Nelkin, “What should the Voting Age Be?” in *Journal of Practical Ethics*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2020)

### **Week 8 Who Should Vote? The Case of Expats and Dual Citizens**

Daniel Weinstock, “On Voting Ethics for Dual Nationals”, K. Breen and S. O’Neill (eds.), *After the Nation-State?*

Robert Goodin and Ana Tanasoca, “Double Voting”, in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 92, no. 4 (2014).

Marcus Carlson Häggrot, “Legislative Expatriate Representation: A Conditional Defence of Overseas Constituencies”, in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 26, no. 5 (2023).

### **Week 9 - 10 Political Parties**

Robert Goodin, “The Place of Parties”, in *Innovating Democracy*.

Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro, *Responsible Parties*, ch. 4

Jonathan Young and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship*, chs. 1, 3.

Fabio Wolkenstein, “A Deliberative Model of Intra-Party Democracy” in *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2018)

Russell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum, “The Political Theory of Parties and Partisanship: Catching Up”, in *American Review of Political Science*, vol. 23 (2020).

Daniel Weinstock, “Corruption in Adversarial Systems: The Case of Democracy”, in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2018).

### **Week 11 Voting Day?**

Dennis Thompson, “Election Time: Normative Implications of Temporal Properties of the Electoral Process in the United States”, in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 98 (2004).

Emilee Chapman, *Election Day*, ch. 5.

Emilee Chapman, “Election Time Again: Revisiting the Temporal Properties of Elections in the Age of Early Voting”.

### **Week 12 Alternatives to Elections: Lottocracy**

Alexander Guerrero, “Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative”, in *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2014).

Arash Abizadeh, “Representation, Bicalmeralism, Political Equality, and Sortition: Reconstituting the Second Chamber as a Randomly Selected Assembly”, in *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2021).

Annabelle Lever, “Why Random Selection is Not Better than Elections if We Value Political Equality and Privacy”, in *Washington University Review of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (2023)

Yann Allard-Tremblay, “The Epistemic Edge of Electoral Voting over Lottery Voting”, in *Res Publica*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2012).

### **Week 13 Alternatives to Elections: Direct Democracy and “Liquid” Democracy**

Hélène Landemore, *Open Democracy*, chs. 6, 8.

Christina Lafont, *Democracy without Shortcuts*, ch. 6.

Trevor Latimer, “Plural Voting and Political Equality: A Thought Experiment in Democratic Theory”, in *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2015).

Christian Blum and Christina Isabel Zuber, “Liquid Democracy: Potentials, Problems, and Perspectives”, in *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2016).

## **Assignments and evaluation**

Grades for this class are based on four elements:

### **(1) Reading Reflections (10%)**

Starting on week 3, you must submit 10 reflections on the required readings of the respective week. This assignment must be emailed to me by **1PM on the day of class** (please use 'reading reflections' or similar as the subject line so we can distinguish these emails from other inquiries).

The assignment is:

After completing the required readings, write brief responses to the following 3 questions:

1. What are the main claims of the reading (1-2 sentences for each assigned item)?
2. What did you find surprising or interesting? Why? (1-2 sentences)
3. What did you find confusing? Why? (1-2 sentences)

Your responses will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. If you submit all 10 and comply with the directives above, you get 10 points.

### **(2) Response paper (30%).**

Short response paper (up to 1,000 words), discussing one of the book chapters/articles assigned for the course. This assignment can be submitted at any point during the semester but must be submitted **within one week** of the day that the piece you are responding to was discussed in class.

### **(3) Final paper proposal (10 %). Due at the end of Week 9**

Please submit a detailed outline or draft of your final paper, which indicates the thesis you are planning to defend as well as the main steps of the argument. This is an opportunity for you to get feedback on your plan for the final paper.

### **(4) Final paper (50%), up to 3000 words. Due two weeks after the last class**

**Submission of work:** All work must be submitted via email to [daniel.weinstock2@mcgill.ca](mailto:daniel.weinstock2@mcgill.ca), as an MS Word file.

**Late submissions:** Late submissions incur a grade penalty. Essays turned in late without an extension will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B to a B-) per calendar day of lateness. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

**Language policy:** In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in

this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**Access:** If you have a disability, please feel free contact us to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you could also contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd) ([www.mcgill.ca/osd](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd)) at 514-398-6009 to make them aware of any requirements you may have.

### **Academic Integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (See <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).