

HISTORY OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY (USW 39, HBS 1139)

Professor David Moss

Harvard University, Fall 2014

Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-5:00

Location: HBS – Aldrich 207

Today we often hear that American democracy is broken—but what does a healthy democracy look like? How has American democratic governance functioned in the past, and how has it changed over time? This course approaches American history with these questions in mind. Based on the case method, each short reading will introduce students to a different critical episode in the development of American democracy, from the drafting of the Constitution to contemporary fights over same-sex marriage. The discussion-based classes will encourage students to challenge each other's assumptions about democratic values and practices, and draw their own conclusions about what "democracy" means in America. This course is ideal for anyone interested in deepening his or her practical and historical understanding of the American political process, and for those interested in gaining experience with the case method of instruction frequently used in business and law schools.

Note: This course, when taken for a letter grade, satisfies the General Education category of United States in the World, as well as the requirement that one of the eight General Education courses also engage substantially with Study of the Past. When taken for a letter grade, it also meets the Core area requirement for Historical Study A.

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND OBJECTIVES

The course content surveys key episodes in the development of democratic institutions and practices in the United States from the late 18th century to today. Cases are presented chronologically but are designed to address a set of unifying topics: (1) the intellectual foundations of American democracy, (2) the evolving definition of "the people" in the political process, (3) the designs and functions of political institutions, both public and private, (4) the elements of democratic culture in the United States, (5) the intersection of democratic and market forces, and (6) the tension between state coercion and individual liberty.

A Note on the Case Method: Because this course will be taught by the case method, students should be aware of how this approach differs from typical approaches used in other undergraduate history courses. Rather than providing a full survey of American history or ingraining the discipline's methods, a case-based approach focuses on key problems and decisions that defined contemporary experience across the nation's history. The case method also emphasizes a different skillset than is typical in the undergraduate classroom by regularly placing students in the position of decision-makers.

The limited scope of a particular decision (e.g., whether Theodore Roosevelt should intervene in a major dispute between industry and labor in 1902) does not imply that the case associated with each class session will simply report on a narrow historical episode. Rather, each case will frame the core decision within a broader historical context (such as the broader history of industrial-labor relations in the U.S.), which may span decades or even centuries. Although the cases in the course, being historical in nature, address decisions that have already been made, many of the central themes and topics that they raise are ones that continue to resonate today. Better understanding such historical patterns will offer students—as citizens, scholars, and even policymakers—critical lessons for thinking about the challenges facing our democracy now, and what sorts of changes and reforms may be needed going forward.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

The grade for the course will be based on class participation (40%), two short writing assignments (10% each), and one final research paper (40%). This course **will not** follow the Business School convention of grading on a forced curve for undergraduates. Successful class participation will require regular attendance, thorough preparation, and active engagement in class discussions and debates. Readings will consist of case studies prepared by Professor Moss and co-authors, and nearly all of the cases will be available to students on the course website. Each case is typically about 15 pages of text plus tables and graphs and has been prepared specifically for use in this course.

The two short papers will ask students to relate historical events addressed in the class to current-day challenges facing the United States and/or other democracies. Each of these essays should be no longer than 750 words, and should advance an evidence-based argument in the spirit of a newspaper op-ed.

The final research paper will typically be approximately 12-15 pages (12 point font, double spaced) and will advance an argument on a topic of the student's choosing that draws on course themes and readings.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is expected that all written work that students submit for the course will be their own (i.e., the exclusive work of the listed author or authors). Co-authoring a paper is an acceptable form of collaboration in the course, but students wishing to co-author assignments with other students must obtain permission from the instructor (or Course Head) in advance. Other forms of collaboration on assignments, including but not limited to sharing research and editing, must also be discussed with and approved by the instructor (or Course Head) before the assignment is submitted.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term, September 12th. This date is important to ensure the Course Head's ability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Course Head may contact the AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

COURSE ADMINISTRATION

Throughout the semester, Professor Moss will be available to meet with students by appointment. To arrange a meeting, please contact his assistant, Joanna Beinhorn, by email (jbeinhorn@hbs.edu) or phone (5-6354).

All other questions pertaining to attendance, readings, assignments, or grading may be directed to the Head Teaching Fellow, John Bell, by email (johnfrederickbell@fas.harvard.edu).

List of Cases / Class Sessions:

Class 1 (Sep 3)	Introduction An Australian Ballot for California?
Class 2 (Sep 8)	Governing an Expansive Republic: James Madison and the “Federal Negative” (1787)
Class 3 (Sep 10)	Implied versus Explicit Powers: Debate over the Bill of Rights and the First Bank of the United States (1787-1791)
Class 4 (Sep 15)	Democracy, Sovereignty, and the Struggle over Cherokee Removal
Class 5 (Sep 17)	Banking and Politics in Antebellum New York (1838)
Class 6 (Sep 22)	Wealth, Property, and Representation: A Crisis of Legitimacy in Rhode Island (1844)
Class 7 (Sep 24)	Democracy and Debt: Debating a Balanced Budget Amendment in Antebellum New York (1846)
Class 8 (Sep 29)	An Informed Citizenry: The Fight over Public Education (1851)
Class 9 (Oct 1)	The American System: Building a New Economy and the Politics of Trade (1857)
October 3:	Due date for FIRST SHORT PAPER
Class 10 (Oct 6)	A Nation Divided: The United States and the Challenge of Secession (1861)
Class 11 (Oct 8)	Race, Justice, and the Jury System in Post-Bellum America (1880)
Class 12 (Oct 15)	Labor, Capital, and Democracy: The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902
Class 13 (Oct 20)	Power of the Press: Muckraking, Interest Groups, and Federal Regulation (1906)
Class 14 (Oct 22)	No class scheduled (conflict with business school calendar)
Class 15 (Oct 27)	Direct Democracy or Directed Democracy? The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in the Progressive Era (1918)
Class 16 (Oct 29)	Democracy, Technology, and the Market: The Politics of Radio Regulation (1926)
Class 17 (Nov 3)	Federal Power, Public Exposure, and the Financial System: The Pecora Investigation (1932-33)
Class 18 (Nov 5)	Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Black Voting Rights

- November 6: **Due date for SECOND SHORT PAPER**
- Class 19 (Nov 10) Manufacturing Constituencies: Race and Redistricting in North Carolina (1994)
- Class 20 (Nov 12) Excerpts on Civil Society in America
- Class 21 (Nov 17) Independence from Whom? The Federal Reserve, Central Bank Independence, and Democratic Accountability during the Financial Crisis of 2007-2009
- Class 22 (Nov 19) Influence, Money, and Speech: The Supreme Court and *Citizens United* (2010)
- Class 23 (Nov 24) Majoritarian Rule vs. Tyranny of the Majority: California's 'Prop 8' and the U.S. Supreme Court (2013)
- Class 24 (Dec 1) Concluding Lecture
- December 8: **Deadline for Final Research Paper**