About the course: This Core course aims to introduce students to classic works both defending and criticizing democracy. It has two linked themes: (1) How should we characterize equality among democratic citizens, and (2) does this equality hinder or help us to produce knowledge and to make wise decisions? The course begins with a study of democratic Athens and key works of Greek political thought analyzing the equality and wisdom of democratic citizens. The course then moves into classics of modern political thought, focusing on questions of representation, deliberation, and expertise. The course concludes with examining the implications of racial and economic inequality in the United States for democratic decision-making.

Readings: Available at the Bookstore or your preferred used/online purveyor. Please buy the assigned translations and editions (it is essential that we can be literally on the same page in class).

For purchase:


Class format: Each week we have two 75-minute lectures and a 75-minute recitation. Recitations aim to help you understand the foundational ideas behind the texts and to enable
you to ask questions in a smaller group setting. They will also give us the chance to critically discuss the texts and the ideas they present. You should complete each reading before the relevant lecture; each recitation then will cover the readings in light of the lectures to have taken place since the last recitation.

**No laptops or tablets:** Laptops, tablets, and phones are generally banned both in lecture and in recitation, except when the material for that session is on NYU Classes. Surfing the web or checking e-mail doesn’t just affect your own ability to learn; it harms the experience of those around you. Moreover, there is ample research in support of the educational benefits of taking notes by hand. If you have a disability that prevents you from handwriting your notes, please contact the Moses Center, and we will work with them to accommodate your needs. (Please do not use any device to record the class, unless pre-arranged with the Moses Center.) We may lower your grade if you violate these policies.

**Participation:** Please read the assignments carefully and be prepared to defend arguments in class. As a means of ensuring participation and of equally distributing the burdens and benefits of class participation, we will use the following mechanisms:

**Random questioning and Volunteering:** For reasons related to the course themes, we will both randomly call on students and look for volunteers in lecture and recitation to discuss the assigned texts for that class.

**Grading:** Your grade is based on the following:

- 1 short (500-word) paper: 5% of grade
- 3 longer (1500-word) papers, each worth 10% of grade
- In-class midterm: 25% of grade
- In-class final: 30% of grade
- Participation in lecture: 5% of grade
- Participation in recitation: 5% of grade

**Assignments:** All assignments will be handed in via NYU Classes on your Recitation Classes page (the teaching assistants will show you where that is during your first recitation).

**Formatting:** Please name your assignments LASTNAME FirstInitial – Assignment Name.docx (so Cocoru A – Long Paper 1.docx). Assignments should be in a 12-point font with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, and saved as a .docx file.

**Late Assignments:** An assignment is late when you submit it more than 10 minutes after the deadline. An assignment is penalized one grade-step (from an A to an A-) when it becomes late, and an additional letter grade for every 24 hours thereafter.

**Extensions:** If you anticipate needing an extension because of multiple simultaneous deadlines, please email your teaching assistant in advance of the deadline, and optimally even before the essay prompt is distributed. We will not grant extensions after the deadline has passed except in documented medical emergencies.

**Plagiarism:** Please familiarize yourself with the rules governing academic integrity at NYU:
Violations will be treated with utmost severity under College procedures. If you have any question about proper citations or the appropriate use of source material, please do not hesitate to contact Professor Schwartzberg or your teaching assistant.

**Religious holidays/medical or family emergencies:** If you anticipate being absent from lecture, recitation, or an exam because of any religious observance, please notify us in advance; please try to notify us if you will have to miss class for a medical or family emergency.

**Schedule of Readings and Lectures**

**I. Introduction**

September 5: What is democracy? (No reading)

September 10: Rosh Hashanah (class canceled)

**II. Athenian democracy and its critics**

September 12: Athenian political institutions and collective knowledge
Josiah Ober, *Classical Athenian Democracy and Democracy Today* (NYU Classes)

September 17: Plato, *Protagoras.*
[Short paper assigned, due September 24 at 11 a.m.]

September 19: Yom Kippur (class canceled)

September 24: Plato, *Republic,* Books I-III

September 26: Plato, *Republic,* Books IV-VII

October 1: Plato, *Republic,* Books VIII-X

[Longer paper #1 assigned, due October 9 at 11 a.m.]

October 3: Aristotle, *Politics* (Book I.1-7; 12-13; Book II, 1-5)

October 8: **Fall Break, No Class**

October 9 (Mon.): Aristotle, *Politics* (Book III; Book IV, 4; Book VI, 1-5)

October 10: Aristophanes, *Assemblywomen* (NYU Classes)
III. Rousseau: Equality and the general will

October 15: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

October 17: Rousseau, *Social Contract* (Books I and II.1-7)


October 24: In-class midterm

IV. Suffrage, representation, and the “tyranny of the majority”

October 29: Putney Debates (NYU Classes)

October 31: *Federalist* 10 and 51 (NYU Classes)

November 5: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*  
[Vol. 1: Author’s Introduction; Part I ch. 3-4; Part II, chs. 3, 4, 5 (pp. 228-235 *only*), 7, 8]

November 7: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*  
(Vol. 2: Part I chs. 1, 2, 8, 9; Part II chs. 1, 2, 4, 8)

November 12: Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” and “What the Black Man Wants” (NYU Classes)

[Longer paper #2 assigned, due 11 a.m. on November 19]


November 19: J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* [chapter 2 (pp. 198-208 *only*; chapter 3; chapter 5; chapter 6)

November 21: Thanksgiving Break (no lecture or recitations)

November 26: J. S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapter 8;  
Harriet Taylor Mill, “Enfranchisement of Women” (NYU Classes)

V. What do citizens know? How do we access information?

November 28: John Dewey, “The Challenge of Democracy to Education”;  
“Democracy and Educational Administration” (NYU Classes)

December 3: Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society” (NYU Classes)  
Elinor Ostrom and Harini Nagendra, “Insights on Linking Forests, Trees, and People from the Air, On the Ground, And in the Laboratory.” (NYU Classes)
December 5: Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics” (NYU Classes)

[Longer paper #3 assigned, due 11 a.m. December 12]

Elizabeth Anderson, “Why Racial Integration Remains an Imperative.” (NYU Classes)

December 12: Conclusion

Mon., December 17, 10-11:50: Final exam