Democracy and the Welfare State

Course Number: POLITICS 217.
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: 11:00-11:50 am
Lewis Environmental Studies Center 201
Spring Semester

Instructor: William Dixon
Office: Rice 14
Department of Politics
Oberlin College
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Office hours: Wednesday, 3:00-5:00 pm or by appointment.

This course will examine the complex relationship between democracy and the welfare state, drawing on both empirical research and normative assessments. We will think about the contemporary welfare state as both a political idea and a historically complex and dynamic set of empirical cases. Drawing upon a wide range of theories and cases, we will consider questions of democratic legitimation, the meaning of economic rights and social citizenship, the variety of welfare-state regimes, the pressures of demographic change, the political and economic impacts of globalization, and the post-2008 rhetoric of “austerity.”

Course Requirements

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<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Group project I - Social Citizenship and Democratic Culture:</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Group project II - Regional Cases:</td>
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<td>Final exam:</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Class participation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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The final exam will be held on Thursday, May 17, 7-9pm. Location to be announced.

No electronic media is permitted in class – including laptops and Kindle etc. Cell phones are to be turned off and out of reach. Paper notebooks only.

Attendance: You are expected to attend class regularly. A maximum of two absences from class will be permitted no questions asked. Any further absences will be either (a) documented as medical or personal emergencies (death in the immediate family and the like) or (b) will result in substantial penalties to your final grade.

Participation: Much of this class will be conducted as a seminar. You are therefore encouraged to pose critical, interpretative, and clarifying questions and comments to the instructor and to one another. You will find that you will get more out of the class if you do. Political science is not a
spectator sport – sustained and thoughtful participation in class is essential to learning, and learning how to use, the course material.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:


Readings Schedule


February 20, 22, 24: Gender, Race, and New Social Movements. BWS chapter three, pages 66-102. WSR pages 120-151.


March 12, 14, 16: BWS chapters four, five, and six, pages 105-198. Group Project I assigned.

March 19, 21, 23: Review. Wednesday, March 21, Midterm I. No class, Friday March 23. Make-up class TBA.

March 26, 28, 30: SPRING RECESS


April 16, 18, 20: Review. Group Project II research.

April 23, 25, 27: Group Project II due April 23. Reports.


Final Exam: Thursday May 17, 7-9pm.