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The Culture of Democracy

The point is to examine democracy not as political system, but as a historical phenomenon characterized by a specific culture: a corpus of ideas and values, stories and myths. This culture is not homogeneous; it has a variety of historical manifestations through the ages but remains nonetheless cohesive. The objective is twofold: 1) to determine which elements in democratic culture remain current, no matter what form they take in various historical instances; 2) to understand that the culture of democracy is indeed not abstract and transcendental but historical, with its central impetus being the self-interrogation and self-alteration of society.

Tentative Syllabus

Week 1 – Introduction

Week 2 – The Athenian Polis and its Consequences

Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funereal Oration” (xerox)

Cornelius Castoriadis, “Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime” (xerox)

Week 3 – The Politics of Antigone

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Peter Euben, “*Antigone* and the Languages of Politics” (xerox)

Week 4 – The Politics of Socrates

Plato, *The Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*

P. Euben, “Democratic Accountability and Socratic Dialectic” (xerox)

Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Individual within the City-State” (xerox)

Week 5 – What’s Modern about the Athenian Imaginary?

From *Demokratia* (Josh Ober, ed.): articles by Ostwald, Wolin, Hansen, Wood, Manville

Week 6 – What’s Modern about the Athenian Imaginary? – II. On *parrhesia*

Cornelius Castoriadis, “The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary” (xerox)

Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*

Week 7 – The Historical Present of Rights

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*

Sheldon Wolin, “Democracy without the Citizen” (xerox)

[*Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen*

Preface to the French Constitution of 1793]

Week 8 – American Sixties: Violence and Democracy

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet?” (xerox)

The SDS Port Huron Statement (Xerox)

Week 9 – From *Public Culture* special issue on *Cultures of Democracy*

Charles Taylor, “Cultures of Democracy and Citizen Efficiency”

Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Cultures of Democracy”

Arjun Appadurai, “Hope and Democracy”

Week 10 – Problems in Instituting Power

Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies* (excerpts)

Giorgio Agamben “The State of Exception as Paradigm of Government” (xerox)

Week 11 – A Democracy for the Planet

Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*

Bruno Latour – Politics of Nature (intro and Ch 2)

Week 12 – A Democracy for the Planet II

Cornelius Castoriadis, “What Democracy?” (xerox)

Sheldon Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy” (xerox)

Week 13 – Democracy-to-Come

Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*

Samuel Weber, “Rogue Democracy and the Hidden God” (xerox)

Grades and Assignments: Take-home Midterm (30%); Term Paper (50%); Class

Participation (20%)

List of Books:

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Plato, *The Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*

Demokratia (Josh Ober, ed.)

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*

Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*

Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*

plus various xeroxed materials