Political Science W3922: Direct Democracy

Fall 2010
Thursday, 2:10pm – 4:00pm
IAB 501

Professor Justin Phillips
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733 International Affairs Building
Office Hours: Monday 2 – 4 pm
& by appointment

This seminar focuses on direct democracy institutions in America—the citizen initiative, referendum, and recall. In particular, the readings explore the motivation behind the adoption of these institutions, their usage, and their effects on public policy, politics, and minority rights. The central question is whether these institutions are beneficial for American democracy.

Course Requirements:

**Attendance & Participation:** This class is conducted in a seminar format. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken weekly. Only university-approved absences are permissible. Students must complete all of the assigned readings and take time to reflect upon them in a critical manner prior to our weekly meeting. Participation grades are determined by attendance and the quality of informed commentary contributed during in-class discussions.

**Short Paper Assignments:** Students are required to complete, during the course of the semester, four short (4-5 pages) review papers reacting to the week’s readings. The first two must be written in the first half of the semester (before November 4th) and the remaining two in the second half. No late papers will be accepted. These papers must be turned in (in hard copy or electronically) no later than 5 p.m. on the Tuesday prior to class.

**Research paper:** Each student is required to complete a 15 to 20 page research paper on a topic of his or her choosing. The topic must be approved by Professor Phillips and cover some general theme related to direct democracy. Students are required to submit a two-page proposal on October 14th. Each student will also be required to give a 10-15 minute presentation on the preliminary findings of his or her research paper. The presentations will take place during the last two weeks of the course. The paper is due by 5 pm on December 18th.

**Grades:** Grades for the seminar will be determined in the following manner

| Class Participation | 25% |
Review Papers 30%
Research Paper Proposal 5%
Presentation of Research Paper 10%
Research Paper 30%

Books To Be Purchased (available at Book Culture, 536 West 112th Street)


Matsusaka, John. 2004. *For the Many or the Few: The Initiative, Public Policy, and American Democracy*. Chicago


Other Readings

Course Packet: (available at the Village Copier on the corner of Amsterdam & 118th)

CourseWorks: Many of the readings for this course will only be available online through Courseworks (https://courseworks.columbia.edu/). These readings are posted under “Class Files.”

COURSE OUTLINE

September 9th: Introduction & Course overview

September 16th: Populism & the Origins of Direct Democracy in America
September 23rd: The Question of Voter Competence


September 30th: The Initiative Industrial Complex


October 7th: How Powerful Are Interest Groups?

October 14th: Direct Democracy & the Attack on Affirmative Action


(2) Paper proposals due

October 21st: Gay & Lesbian Rights


(2) Ruling in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* (CourseWorks)

October 28th: The Tax Revolt


November 4th: Do Judges & Legislatures Undermine Direct Democracy?


November 11th: Recall Elections & the Rise of Arnold Schwarzenegger


(2) Chandler, William M. and Thad Kousser. “Governors, Geography, and Direct Democracy: The Case of Arnold Schwarzenegger.” (CourseWorks)

November 18th: Comparative Direct Democracy
November 25th: Thanksgiving Break

December 2nd: Research Presentations

December 9th: Research Presentations

December 18th: Research Papers Due