

Theory of Democracy

Code: 106188
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Contemporary History, Politics and Economics	FB	1

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

A B2 level of English of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is required, although no specific test of English proficiency level is held to access the degree.

Students have to demonstrate the necessary language skills to engage with texts, present them in open sessions and to critically discuss their contents.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The course has three main objectives:

- That students know the basic elements that define democratic systems
- That students know the different theories of democracy and understand their differences
- That students use the different theories to critically analyze the different challenges to the democratic system

Competences

- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Contrast the main contemporary political theories.
- Explain and summarise knowledge acquired in English language at an advanced level.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.

Learning Outcomes

1. Assessing the contribution of movements like feminism, environmentalism or various identity movements.
2. Define the concepts of democracy and dictatorship, describe the different models and critically evaluate their functioning.
3. Demonstrating good writing skills in different contexts.
4. Interpret the pre-existing political and social frameworks as explanatory background to the current ones.
5. Propose projects and actions in accordance with the principles of ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights, diversity and democratic values.
6. Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
7. Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
8. Use contemporary political theories and understand from them their analytical value for home-based and international case studies.
9. Write a review of a publication, documentary video or event (conference or seminar) in English adapted to the content of one or more subjects on this course.

Content

1. Introduction: the concept of democracy
2. Theoretical and historical origins of democracy: classical democracy, republicanism and liberal constitutionalism
3. Liberal democracy: basic characteristics
4. Critiques and alternatives to liberal democracy: socialism, anarchism, feminism, and nationalism
5. Interpretations of liberal democracy: pluralism and elitism
6. Democratic innovations: deliberative democracy, cosmopolitan democracy and municipalism
7. Challenges of democracy in the age of crisis (populism, climate crisis, and new technologies)

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Lectures, followed by discussion sessions of the compulsory readings and oriented to practical issues, in which cases, problems and examples related to the course agenda will be analyzed.	36.5	1.46	1, 2, 3, 9, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8
Type: Supervised			
Short oral presentation and participation in debates	15	0.6	1, 2, 3, 9, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8
Type: Autonomous			
Reading basic and complementary readings, study of class notes	80.5	3.22	1, 2, 3, 9, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8

The dedication of the student to this subject is divided into various types of activities, each with a certain number of hours of work.

The directed activities are activities in the classroom with the presence of the teacher and will consist mainly of lectures, followed by discussion sessions of the compulsory readings and oriented to practical questions, in which cases, problems and examples related to the subject will be analyzed. These activities represent 35% of the total work required.

The supervised activities are activities that should be completed by the students outside the classroom according to a work plan designed and subsequently tutored and evaluated by the teacher. These activities represent 10% of the dedication of the students.

The autonomous activities are all those that are carried out by student on their own with basic and complementary readings, study of the class notes or all those other activities that complement the learning process that is associated with this course. They represent 55%.

At the end of the semester, 15 minutes will be reserved to complete the teacher evaluation survey.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Assessments (3)	30%	4.5	0.18	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 6, 8
Attendance, participation in debates	10%	12	0.48	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8
Essay	20%	0	0	3, 4, 7, 6, 8
Final exam	40%	1.5	0.06	1, 2, 3, 9, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8

Assessment

The evaluation of this subject is made up of the following parts:

- A final exam that represents 40% of the mark. It is a necessary condition to pass the subject to pass this exam.
- Three assessments, the value of which will be 30% of the final grade for the subject.
- An essay that represents 20% of the final mark. The handing in of the essay is essential to pass the subject.
- Class attendance and participation (10%).

The professor responsible for the subject will set the dates for these assessments to be carried out on the first day of class, always according to the academic calendar set by the Faculty.

To participate in the recovery, the students must have been previously assessed in a set of activities, the weight of which must be equivalent to at least 2/3 parts of the total qualification and the average qualification must be at least 3.5.

The only part of the assessment that can be recovered is the final exam.

Students will obtain a Not assessed/Not submitted course grade unless they have submitted more than 1/3 of the assessment items.

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

This subject does not incorporate single assessment.

Bibliography

This basic bibliography could be modified in the teaching program of the subject, including new references. This teaching program will also include the specific required reading chapters.

- Aristotle *The Politics*
- Dahl, Robert (1971) *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Also available in Spanish: *La Poliarquía: participación y oposición* Madrid: Tecnos.
- Dahlerhup, Drude (2017) *Has Democracy Failed Women?* London: Polity Press
- Engels, Frederic. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.
- Femia, Joseph V. (1993) *Marxism and Democracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Available on-line through the library.
- Held, David, (Various editions) *Models of Democracy*. Available in the library: Held (2007) *Modelos de Democracia*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Hopkin, Jonathan (2020) *Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lenin, V.I. *State and Revolution*.
- Locke, John *Two Treatises on Government*
- Machiavelli, N. *The Discourses*
- MacPherson, Crawford (1977) *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: OUP. Also available in Spanish: (2003) *La Democracia Liberal y Su Época*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Marx, Karl
- Meiksins Wood, Ellen. (1995) *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mill, James *Government*.
- Mill, John Stuart *On Representative Government*.
- Plato *The Republic*.
- Rousseau, Jean Jaques. *The Social Contract*.
- Taylor-Mill, Harriet *The Enfranchisement of Women*.
- Willis, Rebecca (2020) *Too Hot to Handle?: the Democratic Challenge of Climate Change*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*

Software

None

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	50	English	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	50	English	second semester	afternoon