

Direct Democracy: Theory and Practice
POS 6279 (Section 1103)

Fall 2009

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Time: Monday, 8:30-11am
Classroom: Anderson 216
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Course Description

This graduate seminar is intended to provide students with a scholarly overview of direct democracy, focusing specifically on the *theory* and *practice* of the process in the American states. It is our goal not only to critically and normatively assess whether direct democracy promotes democratic norms as well as “good” public policy, but also to empirically investigate the secondary, “educative effects” of the process itself. Some of the central questions we will address include: What are the origins and historical development of direct democracy in the American states? How are ballot measures placed on the ballot, by whom, and for what reasons? How do systems of direct democracy differ across the states? What is the role of money and the media in direct democracy contests? What information is available to voters on ballot questions and can they use it to make rational decisions? Do ballot measures foster or discourage participation in the electoral process? What are the direct and indirect effects of the initiative process in the making of public policy? Are minority rights at all jeopardized by direct democracy’s majoritarian nature? What are the “educative effects” of direct democracy, and can ballot measures affect candidate elections? And perhaps most significantly, does direct democracy complement or undermine our system of representative democracy? These are not easy questions to answer, as the study of direct democracy is anything but settled.

Course Requirements

This course draws a mix of political science Ph.D. and M.A. students, as well as students from other disciplines. The professional expectations and goals of these sub-populations may at times vary, but I will do my best to make sure that this seminar caters to your professional interests.

Participation

Your weekly attendance is required. If you think you may have to miss more than one class during the semester, it is advised that you drop this course immediately. If for some unforeseen reason you are unable to attend class, it is imperative that you contact me ASAP. All students are expected to participate in class discussions, which means not only showing up for class, but being fully prepared to critically discuss the required readings. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Do not assume that by merely showing up for class you will earn full participation credit.

Discussion Leader

Students are required to (co-)lead one class discussion on the readings. This responsibility is worth 10% of your final grade. For the presentation, students must provide a handout in class to fellow students. The handout should provide a brief summary of each assigned reading, including: 1) the research question being addressed; 2) the theories or hypotheses being tested; 3) a summary of the data used or the logic of the argument; 4) the empirical findings. Presentations on the readings should take roughly 10-20 minutes. Open discussion of the readings will follow.

Thought Pieces

Students are required to write four response papers, or what I like to call “thought pieces.” Rather than summarizing, you are to react to the assigned material, critically analyzing the theses, themes, and assumptions of the readings and evaluating the appropriateness of the research designs or methodological techniques. When analytically questioning, comparing, and criticizing the texts, you should relate and interpose the arguments and empirical findings of the readings to previous readings or current political events. You should only briefly summarize the arguments of the readings. Each thought piece is to be roughly 1,000 words. They may be written in the first person. There is no need to provide a reference page unless you cite material not listed in the syllabus. When quoting from or citing the assigned articles, just refer to them by the author’s name, date, and page numbers in the body of the text (e.g., Smith 1998: 45-6).

You will sign up for your four thought pieces during our first session. They must be emailed to me by *noon* on the Sunday prior to our Monday morning class as a Microsoft Word attachment. Turning your assignments in early allows me to consider your thoughts, which in turn, helps to give me an idea of how to structure our discussions. ***I do not accept late thought pieces.*** Each essay is worth 10% of your final grade (40% total). I expect students who turn in thought pieces to be especially ready and willing participants during class.

Research Paper

All students will write a substantial research paper for the course, worth 40% of your final grade. You have two options: 1) a original research paper (18-25 pages) on an aspect of direct democracy; 2) an in-depth, extended (20-25 pages) literature review on a given topic found in the syllabus; or 3) a 20-25 page research proposal/prospectus on your dissertation topic (for those thinking of writing dissertations on direct democracy). With my approval, you may choose to co-author a research paper with another member of class. I also might be interested in collaborating with you on one of my ongoing research projects. I have lots of data (aggregate-level and individual survey, as well as campaign finance), and I also have collected many archival materials that I will share with enterprising students who are interested in co-authoring.

A two-page research prospectus is due in class on September 14, 2008. All students should meet with me during office hours prior to that time to discuss their research proposals. The prospectus must state your research question, your tentative argument and hypotheses, and the data and research methods you plan to use. You might also mention any foreseeable limitations to your research. On October 5, students must submit to me a detailed outline of their research paper, a summary of the data being used, and a bibliography of sources used for the theoretical section of the paper. Students will meet individually with me on that day to discuss the progress they have made on their research papers. On November 30 and December 7, students will present their research in class (approximately 10-15 minutes for each paper). The Ph.D. students will serve as discussants. The final research paper is due on December 14, at 5pm; I need both a hard copy and an emailed MS Word attachment.

UF Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the UF Honor Code, which reads, in part: "I affirm that this work in its entirety is mine alone, and that I have received no outside assistance from anyone else, including classmates, other students, or faculty. I understand that plagiarism, seeking or receiving other unauthorized assistance, or any false representations regarding this exam [or other work] are serious offenses punishable under the Student Honor Code."

Grading

Class Participation	10%
4 Thought Pieces	40% (10% each)
Discussion Leader	10%
Research Paper	40%

Required Texts

The following books are required:

- Elizabeth Gerber, *The Populist Paradox* (1999)
- Thomas Goebel, *A Government by the People* (2003)
- David Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (1984)
- John Matsusaka, *For the Many or the Few* (2004)
- Stephen Nicholson, *Voting the Agenda* (2005)
- Daniel Smith & Caroline Tolbert, *Educated by Initiative* (2004)

In addition to the required texts, there are additional required readings. To access them, click on the hypertext links within the on-line course schedule (for many of them, you must be logged into the UF system). I will make available to you any other readings.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Direct Democracy

August 24

Readings:

Cronin, "[The Paradoxes and Politics of Citizen Initiatives](#)" (1998)

Sign-Up for Thought Pieces and Discussion Leaders

Week 2: What We Know and Don't Know about Direct Democracy

August 31

Readings:

Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (Chapters 1, 2 & 10)

Smith & Tolbert, "[The Instrumental and Educative Effects of Ballot Measures](#)" (2007)

Lupia & Matsusaka, "[Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions](#)" (2004)

Garrett, *Direct Democracy and Public Choice* (2008)

Week 3: NO CLASS—Labor Day

September 7

Week 4: History of Direct Democracy in the American States

September 14

Readings:

Goebel, *A Government by the People* (all)

Piott, *Giving Voters a Voice* (2003) (chapter 1)

Smith & Lubinski, "[Direct Democracy during the Progressive Era](#)" (2002)

Kerber, "[The Initiative and Referendum in Florida, 1911-1912](#)" (1994)

Smith & Fridkin, "[The Adoption of Direct Democracy in the American States](#)" (2008)

Research Paper Prospectus Due in Class

Week 5: Ballot Measure Law, Use, & Reforms

September 21

Readings:

Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (Chapters 3 & 4)

Donovan, "[Direct Democracy as 'Super-Precedent'](#)" (2007)

Florida Senate, "[Options for Streamlining the State Constitution](#)" (2006)

Florida Senate, "[Options for Authorizing Citizens to Propose or Adopt Statutes](#)" (2007)

BISC, [Ballot Integrity Report Card](#) (2009)

Donovan & Smith, "[Identifying and Preventing Signature Fraud on Ballot Measure Petitions](#)" (2008)

Boehmke, "[Sources of Variation in the Frequency of Statewide Initiatives: The Role of Interest Group Populations](#)" (2005)

"Best Practices" Thought Piece assignment for M.A. students due on Sunday prior to class.

Week 6: Campaign Financing of Ballot Measures**October 28****Readings:**

- Gerber, *The Populist Paradox* (all)
- Smith, Campaign Financing of Ballot Initiatives in the “[US States](#)” (2009)
- Strattman, “[Is Spending more Potent For or Against an Initiative](#)” (2006)
- Garrett & Smith, “[Veiled Political Actors](#)” (2005)
- Smith, “[Howard Jarvis, Populist Entrepreneur: Reevaluating the Causes of Proposition 13](#)” (1999)
- Magleby & Patterson, “[Consultants and Direct Democracy](#)” (1998)
- Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (Chapter 8)

Week 7: Individual Research Meetings with Professor Smith**October 5**

Individual meetings with Professor Smith to discuss progress on research paper. A detailed outline, including a summary of the data being used, and a bibliography of sources being used for the theoretical section of the paper due at the time of meeting.

Week 8: Public Attitudes toward Direct Democracy**October 12****Readings:**

- Bowler & Donovan, “[Democracy, Institutions & Attitudes about Citizen Influence on Gov’t](#)” (2002)
- Dyck & Baldassare, “[Process Preferences and Voting in Direct Democratic Elections](#)” (2009)
- Craig, Kreppel, & Kane, “Public Opinion and Direct Democracy: A Case Study” (2001)
- Cronin, “[Public Opinion and Direct Democracy](#)” (1988)
- Dalton, Burklin, & Drummond, “[Public Opinion and Direct Democracy](#)” (2001)
- Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, “[Enraged or Engaged? Preferences for Direct Citizen Participation in Affluent Democracies](#)” (2007)

Week 9: Voting on Ballot Measures**October 19****Readings:**

- Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (Chapters 7 & 9)
- Lupia, “[Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias](#)” (1994)
- Bowler & Donovan, *Demanding Choices* (1998) (chapter 1)
- Branton, “[Examining Individual-Level Voting Behavior on State Ballot Propositions](#)” (2003)
- Nicholson, “[The Political Environment and Ballot Proposition Awareness](#)” (2003)
- Bowler, Donovan, Happ, “[Ballot Propositions and Information Costs](#)” (1992)

Week 10: Minority Rights under Direct Democracy**October 26****Readings:**

- Haider-Markel, Querze, & Lindaman, “[Lose, Win, or Draw? A Reexamination of Direct Democracy and Minority Rights](#)” (2007)
- Hajnal, Gerber & Louch, “[Minorities and Direct Legislation](#)” (2002)
- Bowler, Segura & Nicholson, “[Earthquakes and Aftershocks](#)” (2006)
- Gamble, “[Putting Civil Rights to a Popular Vote](#)” (1997)
- Frey & Goette, “[Does the Popular Vote Destroy Civil Rights?](#)” (1998)
- Donovan & Bowler, “[Direct Democracy and Minority Rights](#)” (1998)
- Voss & Miller, “[Following a False Trail](#)” (2001)
- Tolbert & Grummel, “[Revisiting the Racial Threat Hypothesis](#)” (2003)
- Hero & Tolbert, “[A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy...](#)” (1996)
- Tolbert & Hero, “[Race/Ethnicity and Direct Democracy](#)” (1996)
- Preuhs, “[Descriptive Representation, Legislative Leadership, and Direct Democracy](#)” (2005)

Week 11: Direct Democracy, Representation, and Legislative Responsiveness

November 2

Readings:

- Matsusaka, *For the Many or the Few* (all)
- Bowler & Donovan, "[Measuring the Effects of Direct Democracy on State Policy](#)" (2004)
- Gerber, "[Legislative Response to the Threat of Popular Initiatives](#)" (1996)
- Hagen & Lascher, "[Gun Behind the Door?](#)" (1998)
- Camobreco, "[Preferences, Fiscal Policies, and the Initiative Process](#)" (1998)
- Berry, [Direct Democracy and Redistribution](#) (2009)
- Smith, "[Homeward Bound?](#)" (2001)
- Smith, "[Overturning Term Limits](#)" (2003)
- Magleby, *Direct Legislation* (Chapters 5 & 6)

Week 12: The Educative Effects of Direct Democracy

November 9

- Smith & Tolbert, *Educated by Initiative* (all) (2004)
- M. Smith, "[Ballot Initiatives and the Democratic Citizen](#)" (2002)
- M. Smith, "[The Contingent Effects of Ballot Initiatives and Candidate Races on Turnout](#)" (2001)
- Smith & Tolbert, "[The Initiative to Party: Partisanship and Ballot Initiatives in California](#)" (2001)
- Boehmke, "[The Effect of DD on the Size and Diversity of State IG Populations](#)" (2002)
- Boehmke, [The Indirect Effect of Direct Legislation](#) (2005)
- Tolbert & Smith, "[The Educative Effects of Ballot Initiatives on Voter Turnout](#)" (2005)
- Tolbert, Bowen, & Donovan, "[Initiative Campaigns: Direct Democracy and Voter Mobilization](#)" (2009)
- Donovan, Tolbert, & Smith, "[Political Engagement, Mobilization, and Direct Democracy](#)" (2009)

Week 13: The Educative Effects of Direct Democracy Reconsidered

November 16

Readings:

- Schlozman & Yohai, "[How Initiatives Don't Always Make Citizens: Ballot Initiatives in the American States, 1978–2004](#)" (2008)
- Dyck, "[Initiated Distrust: Direct Democracy and Trust in Government](#)" (2009)
- Dyck & Lascher, "[Direct Democracy and Political Efficacy Reconsidered](#)" (2009)

Week 14: Spillover Effects of Direct Democracy: Agenda Setting & Priming Candidate Votes

November 23

Readings:

- Nicholson, *Voting the Agenda* (all)
- Donovan, Tolbert, & Smith, "[Priming Presidential Votes by Direct Democracy](#)" (2008)
- Smith, DeSantis, & Kassel, "[Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measures and the 2004 Pres Elect.](#)" (2006)
- Smith & Tolbert, "Direct Democracy, Public Opinion, and Candidate Choice" (2009)
- Smith, "[The Effects of Direct Democracy on Candidate Elections](#)" (2006)

Week 15: Research Presentations

November 30

Week 16: Research Presentations

December 7

December 14: Research Papers Due (emailed as an MS Word attachment), by 5pm.