Instructor: Nandita Biswas Mellamphy  
Office hours: Mon. 1:30-2:20pm, or by appointment, SSC 4133  
Contact: nbiswasm@uwo.ca or 519-661-2111 ext. 81161  
Class location and times: Mon. 11:30-1:20 PM, SSC 4105

Course Description: Does democracy still serve as a normative concept? Is the global digital revolution currently underway enriching or conversely, impoverishing democracy? This course explores how the internet and new media/communication technologies transform and constrain, as well as enable and disable democratic theories and practices. Attention will be paid to developing rigorous and critical interpretations and analyses of various democratic theories. The course is divided into 3 parts: the first examines critical approaches and methods in political theory; the second investigates selected theories of democracy, especially ‘deliberative’, ‘agonistic’/‘radical’, ‘cyber’, ‘queer’, ‘decolonial’; the third explores some critical debates in democratic theory and politics.

Course Texts:
- *Theories of Democracy*, Frank Cunningham (Routledge).
- *The Democratic Paradox*, Chantal Mouffe (Verso).
- *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*, Diana Saco (Minnesota).
- *Red Skin, White Mask*, Glen Coulthard (Minnesota).
- Other Required Course Materials will be available on the course website (OWL).

Learning objectives: By the end of this course, students will...
- Be familiar with a range of political theories of democracy, as well as develop critical and rigorous interpretations of these theories.
- Have gained an appreciation of the range of approaches and interpretations of democracy that are used in political research.
- Demonstrate an awareness of how power, culture and history condition/influence knowledge formation and be able to situate knowledge historically and contextually.
- Demonstrate well developed, independent information literacy and research skills and be able to identify goals for their own professional development and further learning.
- Work effectively with others, demonstrating the skills of giving constructive and critical feedback to peers, responding to feedback, and using active listening.

Breakdown of Evaluation:
- Class Participation: this is not an attendance mark; you will be evaluated on your weekly in-class discussion and participation = 15%
• Presentation 1 on course themes, approaches, and methods to studying democracy in a digital era; due in class on **March 23**; includes 5 minutes oral presentation worth 10% and written outline worth 10%= 20%
• Presentation 2 on your final research essay topic; due in class on **March 30** or April 6 (depending on which day you are slotted); includes oral 10% and 10% written outline= 20%
• Final Research Essay: 45% Due by electronic submission **no later than April 20, 2019**.

**Assignment Deadlines and policies:** Please consider these deadlines ‘sacred’! Only in cases in which the student has presented appropriate documentation to their Academic Counseling Officer will any extensions without penalty be considered. Late essay submissions are subject to a penalty deduction of 5% a day (from the due date until the day that the assignment is received by the instructor, including weekends and holidays). **To discuss these policies further, please feel free to meet with me.**

**Course Website** (OWL): Everything having to do with each component of the course will be available on the course website. *The website has not been developed to be a replacement for attending class.* Problems with accessibility to the course website cannot be used as a basis for missing deadlines or appealing your grades. This means that if you are having problems accessing the course website, you must notify your instructor as soon as possible and you will be directed to a computer technician.

**Computer, Cell-phone and Other Gadgets Policy:** You may use your computers to take notes during lectures, but I reserve the right to ensure that you are not text-messaging, surfing the internet, or distracting other students. **No digital recording** (either voice or image) of the lectures is allowed. All cellphones (and similar technologies) must be turned off, silent or on ‘vibration’ mode during the duration of the class and during tutorials.

**Communication Policy:** I encourage you to visit me during my weekly office hours to introduce yourself, ask questions, or seek clarifications about the readings. Otherwise you can also communicate with me through email (please allow up to two days for responses). You can always leave me a voice message on my campus telephone (extension 81161).

**Statement on Academic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Support Services:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health at Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. [http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/)
Weekly Reading Schedule (subject to modification):
* indicates that the reading is available on the course website.

1. Introductory Class: Course Themes, Mechanics, and Outline (Jan. 6)
Hamid Dabashi, “Can Non-Europeans Think?”
https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/20131114142638797542.html

   Part I: Critical Approaches and Methods in Political Theory

2. Understanding Normative and Critical Approaches (Jan. 20)
* Amy Gutman, “Democracy, Philosophy, and Justification” in Democracy and Difference.
* Benjamin Barber, “Foundationalism and Democracy” in Democracy and Difference.

3. Critical Political Theory: Some Thoughts on Research Design and Methods (Jan. 13)

4. Comparing Normative and Critical Approaches (Jan. 27)
* Barbara Cruikshank, The Will to Empower: Democratic and Other Subjects, introduction and chapter 1, p. 1-42.

   Part II: Theories of Democracy

5. Normative Theories of Democracy: Deliberative Democracy and Its Critics (Feb. 3)
* Seyla Benhabib, “Towards a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy” in Democracy and Difference, p. 67-94.
*Iris Marion Young “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy” in Democracy and Difference, p. 120-135.

6. Critical Theories of Democracy: Agonism and Its Critics (Feb. 10)
*Jodi Dean, ‘Politics Without Politics’ in Reading Rancière, p. 73-94.

(Happy Reading Week! Feb. 17)

**Part III: Critical Debates on Democracy: Does Digitality Strengthen or Weaken Democracy?**

7. On Democratic Dissensus (Feb. 24)

8. Decolonizing Democracy (Mar. 2)

9. Cybering Democracy (Mar. 9)
*Diana Saco, Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet, p. xi-74.

Philip Howard, Pax Technica

11. **Student Presentations** on course themes and concepts (Mar. 23): Round table discussion from class members about takeaways on research design, concepts and conceptual definitions and mapping; discussion should include reflection on normative vs. critical approaches: when to use them? Which course concept are useful or not in studying democracy and why? Why history, power, culture matter and how we can build this into the research process? Why decolonizing methods and approaches to studying democracy are important? How to study democracy and technology or digital culture?

12. **Student Presentations** on **Your** Research Question and Research Design (Approach, Methods and Material (Mar. 30 and Apr. 6)