

# PROBLEMS IN DEMOCRACY

(0122-305-01)

R. Dennehy

10-1145am

Office Hours: Mon & Wed. 3-4 pm, Fri & by appt.

Location: CAM D6; x6456; [dennehyr@usfca.edu](mailto:dennehyr@usfca.edu)

website: [usfca.edu/philosophy/raymond](http://usfca.edu/philosophy/raymond)

This course is an inquiry into three of the **philosophical** foundations of democratic society. The method will be two-fold. First, to analyze the concepts *life, liberty, and happiness* in the latter's commitment to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," in the context of contemporary topics of debate such as: the First Amendment freedom of expression vs. pornography, hate speech, and political correctness; the right to privacy and reproductive freedom vs. the right of the unborn to life; the death penalty, which pits society's claims to justice and protection vs. the claim that the death penalty is barbarous and contrary to the democratic commitment to protect the right to life; laboratory reproduction and other aspects of the biotechnical revolution that are said to challenge traditional views of family life, gender, and sexual intercourse; physician-assisted suicide, arguing for the individual's freedom to decide when and how to die vs. the medical profession's traditional image of the physician as healer rather than killer, as well as the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage, which condemns suicide. The second part of the method will be to relate the concepts and theories obtained by the above analysis to philosophies of the human person, epistemology, and ethics.

**Learning Outcomes:** (1) Introduce the student to topics of contemporary public debate; 2) inculcate in the student the mindset of looking for the philosophical presuppositions at work in each side of the debate and of seeking to determine if either side promotes or threatens the democratic commitment to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

## Required Texts

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America; reflections on a multicultural society* Revised & enlarged edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998)

Jacques Maritain, *Natural Law: reflections on theory and practice*: Ed. by William Sweet (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2001)

*Various readings from the internet & class handouts*

## Grading

Grading for the course will be based on 1 midterm test (2 essay topics) and a final examination. (3 essay topics) The midterm test will count for 1/3 of the course grade and the final examination (3 essay topics) will count for 2/3. The midterm must be written in a bluebook, the final examination is a take-home and must be typed or sent by e-mail.

## Examination Policy

Students must take the midterm test and final examination at the time, date, and place assigned. Failure to do so will result in an "F" grade for the test. Make-up tests will be

given only in cases of verified, justifiable incapacity – e.g., a physician’s signed statement indicating that the student was medically advised not to take the test or where I find the student’s excuse acceptable. Examples of unacceptable reasons: “If I fly home early, I can save x number of dollars on my ticket”; “My fiancé’s family is planning a reception for me at Lake Tahoe”; or the classic, “Gee, Prof., I’m sorry, but I didn’t remember until now that I’ll be out of town when the test is given.” The midterm test will be given on **Wed. March 12<sup>th</sup>, at 1 pm**; the final examination will be given examination due on **Wed., May 21<sup>st</sup>, at 8am**.

### **Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction for the course; 4 unexcused absences, 2 full grade reductions for the course; 5 unexcused absences, an “F” final grade.

### **Assignments**

#### **Topic: Is America Monocultural or Multicultural?**

Reading: **Schlessinger & handout (tba)**

#### **Topic: The Challenge of Liberal Democracy**

Reading: John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, Ch 1; <http://www.utilitarianism.com/jsmill.htm>  
Maritain  
Handouts (tba)

#### **Topic: The Right to Life**

Reading: 1. John Stuart Mill, “Speech in Favor of Capital Punishment,”

<http://ethics.acusd.edu/Mill.html>;

2. “Death Penalty: No Reason,”

[http://www.creativeideasforyou.com/no\\_capital\\_punishment.html](http://www.creativeideasforyou.com/no_capital_punishment.html);

3. “Focus on the Death Penalty,” <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/just/death/index.html>;

4. “God and the Death Penalty,” <http://www.theologyonline.com/DEATH.HTML>;

5. “The Death Penalty: Morally Defensible?,”

<http://www.carmical.net/articles/deathpenalty.html>;

6. “The Death Penalty – A Balanced

Debate” <http://www.angelfire.com/wy/intellectualloafing/discussionsfolder/myessaysfolder/deathpenaltyfolder/deathpenaltyessay.htm>

7. “Ernest van den Haag, “The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense” & Jack Greenberg, “Against the American System of Capital Punishment”;

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/angel/procon/>

#### **Topic: *Abortion***

Reading:

1. “Is Abortion Murder?” <http://law.about.com/library/weekly/aa980119.htm>

2. Arguments In Favor of Abortion Choice, <http://prochoice.about.com/cs/prochoice/>;

3. Aborted Children Photos <http://www.prochoicesucks.com/BigTime/menuphotos.htm>

**-- NOT REQUIRED READING AND GHASTLY TO BEHOLD; YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHETHER YOU WANT TO VISIT THIS SITE.**

4. “Baby Body Parts: For Sale,” <http://www.traditionalvalues.org/fetal/prices.html>;

[Prochoice](http://www.prochoice.org/)

6. George McKenna, "On Abortion: A Lincolnian Postion";  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/95sep/abortion/abortion.htm>

**Topic: *Partial-Birth Abortion***

Reading:

- 1."Dilittation & Extraction Procedures (a.k.a. D&X, PBA,  
& Partial-Birth Abortions) All sides to the issue,"  
[http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo\\_pba.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_pba.htm)
- 2." Partial-Birth Abortion: A Chink In The Pro-Abortion Armor"  
[http://cwfa.org/library/life/1999-10\\_pp\\_pba.shtml](http://cwfa.org/library/life/1999-10_pp_pba.shtml)

**Topic: *Fetal Stem Cell Research***

Reading:

1. Scott Klusendorf, "Fetal Tissue & Embryo Stem Cell Research,"  
<http://www.str.org/free/bioethics/stemcell.pdf>;
2. American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Institute for Civil Society: Recommendations on Embryo Stem Cell Research,  
<http://www.aaas.org/spp/dspp/sfrl/projects/stem/report.pdf>