LAR 202: Integrative Seminar: Democracy and Diversity

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Required Books:
ISBN: 978-0-393-93889-0

Excerpts from:
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (provided)
Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York* (provided)
Other readings provided by the instructor

**PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENT**

Read in Offutt: Parts 1 and 2, pages 3 - 61

LAR 202: Debating Democracy: New York / American Revolution, a course studying the emerging 18th century American society at a moment of democratic crisis as Americans debated not only the question of independence, but also questions of basic rights and equality. Thus students will discuss key issues on how to establish democracy and unity, national identity and authority, and social and economic justice.

In a collaborative setting, students will apply and integrate knowledge and experiences to examine complex questions related to democracy and diversity from multiple perspectives such as: What are the sources of power of those who govern the society, and what constraints exist on that power? How do they balance the demands of the community (political, religious, or class) with individual liberty? What influence do issues of religion, race, or ethnicity have on questions of rights within the society? What tensions exist between differences in wealth and status and attitudes toward economic inequality?

Students will get a chance to explore these questions and others to come to their own reasoned conclusions on the promise and dilemmas of establishing truly democratic societies. These discussions will help them develop the critical thinking and communication skills necessary for intellectual inquiry, the empathy for differences in human conditions that help them develop appropriate values for a meaningful personal life, and the knowledge of the issues faced by democratic societies that can help them develop as an engaged citizen.
This course on Debating Democracy is being taught as a Liberal Arts Seminar 202 and provides an important component of the liberal education called for in Doane’s mission statement.

*Doane College’s mission is to provide an exceptional liberal arts education in a creative, inclusive, and collaborative community where faculty and staff work closely with undergraduate and graduate students preparing them for lives rooted in intellectual inquiry, ethical values, and a commitment to engage as leaders and responsible citizens in the world.*

**Doane Core Curriculum description for LAR 202: Integrative Seminar: Democracy and Diversity**

*In a collaborative setting, students will apply and integrate knowledge and experiences to examine complex questions related to democracy and diversity from multiple perspectives. This course can address far-reaching issues that are enduring or contemporary in areas such as culture and values, science and society, global interdependence, citizenship, or human dignity and freedom. (Sophomore status, and successful completion of LAR 101 or equivalent, 3 credits)*

The course will be taught using a pedagogy known as “**Reacting to the Past.**” “Reacting to the Past” seeks to introduce students to major ideas and texts. It uses a role-playing format to replicate the historical context in which these ideas acquired significance. The course will provide diverse learning activities including collaboration, oral presentations, research opportunities and student-led discussions. This section of Debating Democracy will deeply explore the diverse qualities of the emerging American society through one game.

**Examples of roles:**

- Patriot leaders
- Moderate indeterminates
- Women
- Loyalist leaders
- Landless laborers
- Slaves
LAR 202 Program Learning Outcomes

Students will work to:

• **Connect the methods and research of more than one field of study to address complex issues.** In Debating Democracy students will be asked to analyze varied sources—history, political philosophy, economics, and sociology—to make reasoned arguments supported by relevant evidence. Students will read and critically analyze several issues related to democratic decision-making. They will be asked to confront historical debates using classic texts and then come to their own reasoned conclusions on the promise and dilemmas of establishing truly democratic societies. They will be required to write persuasive essays and make oral presentations that develop the rational analysis called for the Doane Core Curriculum’s critical thinking and communication rubrics.

• **Recognize multiple social, political, religious, cultural or global perspectives on complex issues.** Each game will ask students to research and communicate roles that engage them in understanding diverse political, religious, social, and ethnic groups. Assessment of the Reacting to the Past games has demonstrated that they help students develop empathy for differences in human conditions that can help them appreciate the issues faced by democratic societies and the demands placed on responsible global citizens.

• **Develop collaborative skills, which may include research and presentation of knowledge.** Students will be grouped explicitly in factions or parties that collaborate to develop research and presentations on key issues as well as inform other students of their own unique identities within the context of the games. With the use of role-playing games, students will share the responsibility for establishing course learning goals, collaboration, and teaching each other for significant sections of the course and will receive further training in critical thinking and persuasive writing. They will be able to explore critical issues of leadership, dialogue, and collective responsibility through reflection on their roles in the games.

• **Use reflection to examine their distinctive voices and to explore how they will connect knowledge across disciplines and experiences to shape their values and goals.** Students will engage in several active learning techniques including goal-setting, group presentations, and role-playing debate. During the course of each individual game students are re-enacting democratic processes and researching powerful roles that immerse them in the vital issues of democratic debate. Thus the class activities simulate ways citizens participate in democracy today. These include discussing the interpretation of constitutional elements, considering if changes in law are required to promote issues of justice, writing and getting signatures for petitions, writing letters or newspaper articles to others about one’s opinion on public matters, voting, discussing policy concerns with those with whom one has a sense of shared interest -- and with those with whom one
does NOT feel one has a sense of shared interest, etc. These are not only classroom activities but model ways in which citizens can share orally and in writing their public concerns with others and with the government. Each game will lead to a detailed post mortem in which the instructor leads the students in an examination of the historical and philosophical issues raised in the game as well as a review of the key skills in research, argumentation, written and oral communication, and/or multicultural competency developed during the game. The course can be framed by student reflective essays using the Doane Core Curriculum rubrics on integrative and reflective thinking in order to make the learning more explicit.

This section will have these specific Learning Outcomes:

Students who take responsibility for full participation in the class will enhance their abilities to:

1. Analyze important texts and ideas (demonstrated through research in primary documents as well as secondary interpretive works as documented for written essays)

2. Understand the historical context surrounding significant debates on the fundamental principles of democracy (demonstrated through written essays and oral in-class presentations)

3. Display improved skills in persuasion and argumentation both in speaking and in written form, particularly through establishing clear claims, reasons for belief in the claim, and evidence to support those reasons (demonstrated through written essays and oral in-class presentations)

4. Enhance leadership and collaboration skills through group discussions and teamwork on strategy and presentations (demonstrated through the functioning of factions/groups in course sessions).

5. Demonstrate an increase in empathy – an understanding that key questions have multiple human perspectives (demonstrated through reflective writing and the final essay examination)

6. Discuss the problems and possibilities in establishing democracy, and indicate the impact of that knowledge on their own perception of their role in a democratic system (demonstrated through reflective writing and the final essay examination)

Student pursuit of these course outcomes will continue their development of the Doane Core Curriculum’s habits of an intellectual and balanced life to communicate effectively, use information wisely, and to examine their own attitudes.
Schedule of class meetings, readings, and assignments

Session 1: Introduction to the course – reflective writing using the reflective writing prompts, and discussion – student concepts of democracy, citizenship, and diversity, and questions on the purposes and effectiveness of democratic practices. Background lecture / discussion: Social and ideological background of the American Revolution. For Session 2 Prepare and submit first reflection paper in Blackboard.

Session 2: No Class Meeting – For Session 3 read in Offutt: pages 97-131; Read Schecter’s Battle for New York available in Blackboard. Prepare and submit second reflection paper in Blackboard.

Session 3: Lecture and discussion: John Locke, Second Treatise of Government (excerpts), Game Book, and Schecter, The Battle for New York. Assignment of roles. Quiz on assigned readings particularly Locke’s analysis of the state of nature, self-evident rights, self-interest, the social contract, and the right of rebellion. For Session 4 read in Offutt: Sections 3 and 4, pages 63-96; also read and review role sheets. Prepare and submit third reflection paper in Blackboard.

Session 4: Discussion of writing for the game and game rules. Faction meetings. Provincial Congress meets, elects chair. For Session 5 read in Offutt: pages 131-160; read supplemental information for role available in Blackboard. Prepare and submit fourth reflection paper in Blackboard.

Session 5: Debate on Association (non-importation and non-exportation to Britain) and the courts – first papers / presentations at the podium citing principles from Locke and other authors, and confronting the reality of popular assent and voluntary enforcement through local committees and extra-legal actions. (Public sessions 1 and 2)

Session 6: Public sessions 3 and 4. First newspaper published. Debate and vote on petitions and issue of the military – whether New York should begin military preparations following news of the Battles of Lexington and Concord; the role of the poor, women, and slaves in military preparation leading to the larger debate: can someone without personal autonomy participate in politics? For Session 7 read in Offutt: pages 160-192


Session 8: Finish post-mortem. Discussion of Federalist #10 For March 12: prepare and submit final critical reflection in Blackboard and LiveText. The following are examples of questions that can be raised to determine the shape of a constitution. How would your character answer these questions? How would you persuade others of your ideas?

* Sources of Authority. What are the sources of power of those who govern the society, and what constraints exist on that power? How are the governing institutions of the
society justified in their exercise of power? What role do different segments of society play in shaping political decisions? The central focus is on the issue of legitimate governance and the basis for authority. Underlying these questions are basic philosophical or religious questions on human nature.

• **The Individual and the Community.** What is the relationship between the individual and the community? How are the lives of individuals shaped by understandings of community, nation, family, faith, sexuality, and similar social institutions and meanings? What balance is given between the demands of the community versus the liberty of individual expression?

• **Justice and Privilege.** How is material wealth distributed? What positions do different people occupy in the economic life of the culture? What is the extent of social equality and mobility? How does the culture balance individual opportunity with material equality or egalitarianism? What tensions exist between differences in wealth and status and attitudes toward economic inequality, between privilege and basic material wellbeing?
Assessment Methods
Both oral and written forms of communication will be assessed including participation in group activities, such as ability to work through issues with others, preparation outside class, and sharing ideas in small group discussion.

Initial Reflections – 25 Points Each (Due weekly in sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5; submitted via Blackboard.) Respond to the writing prompts as directed.

American Revolution / John Locke Quiz – 30 points (Session 3)

Paper 1 – 35 points (Session 5 or as directed, PDF, Blackboard)

Paper 2 – 35 points (Session 7 or as directed, PDF, Blackboard and LiveText)

Papers (4-5 pages each) can be written in one of three primary styles:
1. The Pamphlet – containing an argument for a critical intellectual or ideological point;
2. The Petition – submitted with deference to the appropriate authority to achieve a particular goal;
3. The Newspaper Narrative – either as a letter to the editor or a narrative on particular events (debates, mob action, etc.) as you experienced them and an argument as to their impact.

Participation (discussions, in-class presentations, debates, etc.) – 100 points.
All students are required to participate in the debates during the public sessions of the Provincial Congress.

Final Critical Reflection – 100 points (Due 1 week after Session 8 as a PDF in Blackboard and LiveText)
This assignment provides the opportunity to reflect on the impact of this course when added to your earlier experiences, academic and non-academic. By redefining your understanding of diversity and democracy you will be better able to identify those principles that you value and those experiences that you want to pursue in your remaining college years to build your knowledge and skills to prepare to build a just society with peoples of diverse backgrounds and to tackle difficult social and political problems.
**Initial Reflection Papers**

**Purpose of Assignments:** All students in LAR 202 will be grappling with complex issues of democracy and diversity. These topics can be difficult to explore and an appropriate starting point is often to consider where we are now at the beginning of the process.

**Assignment Instructions**

Prepare one or more documents with brief responses (approximately 1 page) to specific prompts from the list below, as directed by your instructor. Your completed assignment(s) should be typed and double-spaced. A well-supported response will include personal examples and thoughtful reflection on your own experiences that follows this general format:

- a. Description: What happened?
- b. Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling during the experience?
- c. Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?
- d. Analysis: What sense can you make of the situation?

**Writing Prompts**

1. To what communities do you belong and how have those groups helped to shape your sense of self? What do you contribute to those communities?
2. To what new communities, groups, or worldviews have you been introduced at Doane? What have they contributed to developing or challenging your own sense of self and purpose?
3. When have you encountered beliefs that differ or contradict your own?
4. How have you dealt with ideas and beliefs that contradict yours; how have you reconciled those challenges?
5. What do you now believe the value of community and diversity and why do you believe it?
6. How has your understanding of diversity shaped your own sense of responsibility to engage with the world? To the extent possible cite the specific academic and co-curricular experiences that have helped to shape your beliefs.
7. What group of people represents your in-group? In other words, what kinds of people do you identify with the most? What are the characteristics of this group with which you identify?
8. What group of people are obvious examples of your out-group? In other words, what kinds of people do you think you have no connection with? What are the characteristics of this group that separates you from them?
9. How much contact do you have with people who represent your out-group? Where do you get these ideas of similarity and difference between groups? Do you think there are any similarities between your in-group and out-group?

10. Where does information about different groups come from? Do all groups get to represent their images of themselves equally?

Final Critical Reflection

Purpose of assignment: This assignment provides the opportunity to reflect on the impact of this course when added to your earlier experiences, academic and non-academic. By redefining your understanding of diversity and democracy you will be better able to identify those principles that you value and those experiences that you want to pursue in your remaining college years to build your knowledge and skills to prepare to build a just society with peoples of diverse backgrounds and to tackle difficult social and political problems.

Assignment Instructions:

Write two essays in response to the prompts below 1) Diversity and Democracy and 2) Education. The essays should be typed and double spaced in one document with headings, and submitted through LiveText.

Please consider your own growth over the course of your educational, co-curricular and life experiences. You might consider looking back over the responses you have written to earlier reflective prompts for this course to explore your own growth and consider any changes in your own understanding. A well-supported response will include personal examples and thoughtful reflection on your own experiences that follows this general format:

a. Description: What happened?

b. Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling during the experience?

c. Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?

d. Analysis: What sense can you make of the situation?

1. DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY:

a. Look back at the answers you provided to the critical reflections from the beginning of this course regarding diversity and democracy. What do you now see as the critical issues that we need to face to create a well-functioning democracy? What means of engagement are you most likely to choose if you wish to help confront a critical social or political issues?

b. Where in your range of academic or co-curricular experiences have democratic processes played a role? What have you learned from your personal involvement in democratic or social engagement? Have your values been changed – or deepened?

c. Describe an experience when you have engaged with people from diverse background that are different from your own. In this case, how are you defining
diversity? What assumptions did you have going into the experience? How did the experience challenge your perspectives and assumptions? If it did not challenge your perspectives and assumptions, why do you think this is? Has that experience changed your thought about your future actions (career, study abroad, political or social involvement, etc.)?

2. EDUCATION: Reread your LAR 101 critical reflection on the essay by William Cronon “‘Only Connect…’ The Goals of a Liberal Education” and reflect on how your perspective(s) on liberal education may have changed based on the work you have done in this course, in other courses and in other experiences beyond the classroom, providing specific examples. If you did not take LAR 101 at Doane, read the Cronon essay and respond to the following questions. How have your goals for your education changed since you began your college coursework and/or took LAR 101? What experiences or courses do you plan to seek next?
**Rubrics for grading persuasive writing and speaking**

A papers will introduce **a clear claim, reasons for believing that claim, and provide evidence from the primary sources** in the texts and developed in library and on-line research. They will be written in a clear style that follows the Writing Advisories posted on Blackboard for the course. They will reflect the voice of the time period and the role assigned to each student.

B papers will state a clear claim at some point in the paper and provide evidence from primary materials in class texts. They may show a few errors of style, but by and large are clear and represent the role and the time period.

C papers have a weak claim with no reasons for belief, some reference to the time period, and minimal evidence. They may have several stylistic errors.

D papers have a weak claim and a little reference to the time period, but have a confused organization and little evidence.

F papers have no claim, a confusing organization, and cite no evidence.

**Rubric for grading persuasive speaking and game participation**

A speeches **state a strong claim in the introduction, and provide a clear organization of reasons for belief in the claim and evidence to support the reasons.** They will cite evidence from primary sources or examples of events or laws drawn from the time period as developed by research in the library and on-line. They will reflect the voice of the time period and the role assigned to each student. Students will attend all game sessions and participate in informal debates on a regular basis. If a member of a faction, they actively work with the group to achieve its victory objectives.

B speeches will state a clear claim at some point in the speech and provide evidence from primary materials in class texts. They may show a few errors of style, but by and large are clear and represent the role and the time period. Students will attend all game sessions and participate in informal debates at least once each week. If a member of a faction they will provide some help in developing the strategy of the group.

C speeches have a weak claim and minimal evidence. They may have several stylistic errors, although providing some reference to the time period. Students may miss one of the game sessions, and rarely participate in informal discussions. If a member of a faction they attend some of the group’s meetings and provide voting support for its objectives.

D speeches have a weak claim with little reference to the time period. They have a confused organization and little evidence. Students may miss 2 game sessions. Students provide minimal support to their group.

F speeches have no claim, a confusing organization, and cite no evidence. They miss more than two class sessions and provide no support to their faction.