



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Department Of English

**Instructor: Michael Tavel Clarke**  
**Winter 2023**  
**Thursday 13:00 - 15:45 MST**  
**Social Sciences 1015**  
**Course Web Page: <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca>**

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COURSE SYLLABUS  
ENGL 517.42 S03: LITERATURE AND DEMOCRACY

Course Description

Pro-democracy movements have swept the world in recent decades, including the Arab Spring, Tajamuka in Zimbabwe, Movimiento 15-M in Spain, the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, and campaigns in Belarus, Myanmar/Burma, and Sudan, to name a few; these movements join longstanding crusades like the pro-democracy movement in China. Meanwhile, we have seen the renewal of far-right activism, fascism, and totalitarianism in various parts of the world. Powerful global economic institutions operating outside the control of democratic governments are also putting pressure on democratic governance, and the widespread political prioritization of security and terrorism within ostensibly democratic nations often curtails both citizens’ and non-citizens’ rights, undermining the individual liberty that has long been an integral component of democratic politics. Finally, feminist, anti-colonial, and race studies scholarship continues to challenge many of the supposedly liberatory premises of Western democratic theory.

This context has encouraged a new wave of art and theory on the possibilities and challenges of democracy. This course situates the current outpouring of theoretical reflection in the long history of democratic theory. We will read a range of literature in relation to democratic theory and as theory in its own right.

Required Texts

- Bernard Crick, *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2002)—available through UC library
- Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy* (Verso, 2006)
- Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (Zone Books, 2015)—available through UC library
- Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford UP, 2017)—available through UC library
- Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” (1855 edition)—available online at <https://whitmanarchive.org/>
- Han Kang, *Human Acts* (Granta, 2014)
- Essays and book chapters available through the UC library (for a complete list, see D2L)
- Readings chosen by the class

Course Requirements

Percentage of Final Grade

Short Essay (approx. 5 pp.).....	20%
Article Review (2 pp.).....	10%

Research Paper (approx. 10 pp.).....	40%
D2L Discussion Contributions.....	15%
Class Facilitation.....	10%
Class Participation .....	5%

There will be no registrar-scheduled exam for this course.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will read and analyze current interdisciplinary scholarship on the theory and history of democracy. The scholarship and class conversations will invite students to consider such topics as the following: what democracy means today, politically and culturally, and what it has meant in other times and places; what it means to implement democracy, how it has been implemented, and how it might be implemented differently; and the relationship between democracy and other political and cultural forms.
- Students will integrate their knowledge of the scholarship on democracy with the analysis of literary and possibly other cultural texts. Doing so will involve reflection on and discussion of ways to integrate political and literary analysis. Students will consider, through discussion and writing, questions such as the following: How have literature and culture evolved alongside, and in conversation with, the development of democratic politics? What are the features of democratic and anti-democratic literature and culture in different times and places? How have art and literature imagined, theorized, fostered, resisted, and opposed democratic politics and culture? How have scholars thought and written about the relationship between literature and democracy, and what are other ways to think and write about that relationship?
- Students will produce original scholarship.
- Students will practice skills important to the profession of literary studies, including teaching (e.g., developing teaching plans, facilitating class discussions, lecturing, etc.), shaping and conducting research projects, and delivering research talks. In addition to practicing these skills, students will have opportunities to reflect on and discuss ways to democratize the profession.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

There is a D2L site for this course that contains required readings and other relevant class resources and materials. In order to successfully engage in this course, students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- a computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- a current and updated web browser;
- an internet connection.

Grading System

You must complete all written work to qualify for a passing grade. Individual assignments will receive letter grades. Grades are calculated according to the English Department’s standardized percentage conversion scale:

90 + %	A+	4.0	67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
85 – 89 %	A	4.0	64 – 66 %	C	2.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7	60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3	55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0	50 – 54 %	D	1.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7	0 – 49 %	F	0

The interpretation of the undergraduate university grading system can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-1.html>.

In calculating final grades, students must have surpassed the minimum grade threshold to qualify for any letter grade; that is, grades will never be rounded up into the nearest grade category even if very close to that minimum threshold.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

### About Short Essays

In the short essay, you will make a persuasive argument about one of the assigned texts. If you wish to write a conventional literary analysis, you may write about Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Allegiance to Gratitude," Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, or Langston Hughes' "Theme for English B" in relation to any of the ongoing themes in the course or in relation to any of the scholarship assigned in the course. Alternatively, since much of the reading for the early part of the course will be theoretical, you may write a theory essay, analyzing either a single theoretical text or comparing the ideas in different texts. The goal will be to intervene in the theoretical conversation. There are various ways to make a theoretical intervention. Here are some: Does the text suggest the need to rethink a theoretical concept or approach? Do you have doubts about the assumptions of a theorist's argument, and what would change if you altered those assumptions? Is there a problem or oversight in a theorist's argument, and might you offer a new argument by correcting that problem or oversight? Might you develop a theorist's ideas further? What are the unexplored implications of a theorist's ideas, and what are the results of acknowledging those unexplored implications? Do the ideas of one theorist suggest the need for a second theorist to refine or change their ideas, and what are the consequences of refining or changing the second theorist's ideas? Might you integrate the ideas of two or more theorists to generate a new idea? Can you resolve a conflict or dispute between two or more critics? How is the argument of a theorist shaped by their historical context, and what might that reveal about the argument, particularly in the contemporary context? There is no mandatory research component for these papers. Please submit your short essay to the Dropbox on D2L.

### About Article Reviews

At some point in the term—either in preparation for writing your research paper or simply to gain outside knowledge about a selected text or topic—you will read and consider published research. You will write a two-page summary, analysis, and evaluation of a journal article and post the review on D2L for the benefit of your classmates. (Please also submit a copy to me by email as a Word document or PDF—no Pages docs please, since I can't open them.) Article reviews are due Mar. 20.

### About Research Papers

For this assignment, you will write a persuasive essay on a text or topic of your choice with the goal of contributing to or intervening in a scholarly conversation about that text or topic. You might, for example, write a paper about Han Kang's *Human Acts*, responding to the published criticism of that work and grounding your response in some of the theoretical writings on democracy assigned in the course. You may write about a literary or cultural text not assigned in the course if the text itself, or the scholarly discussion around the text, has relevance for the conversations in the course. If you're interested in democracy in China, for example, you might write about Xiaolu Guo's *I Am China* or Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain*. If you're interested in art and sculpture, you might write about the artwork at the Gwangju Memorial Park in Korea, inspired by the same events as Han's *Human Acts*, or you might write about the Statue of Liberty. I'm happy to discuss your project with you; I'll also provide feedback on a proposal you'll submit by Mar. 27.

### About D2L Discussion Contributions

For four of the eligible class sessions of your choice, you will post one discussion question on D2L the day before we meet. These questions should address the week's assigned readings or enduring questions in the course. Questions should be well-considered and provocative, and they should allow for multiple responses (i.e., there shouldn't be right or wrong answers). Posted questions may be used by those who are assisting student-led class facilitations. For two additional weeks of your choice, you will post a 600-word response to the assigned readings. Responses may take several forms: analyses or critiques of the assigned texts, comparisons between assigned texts, discussion of outside readings applicable to the assigned texts (e.g., discussion of a published essay on Han's *Human Acts*), responses to questions posted by classmates, or discussion of persisting questions in the course. Please deliver these 600-word reading responses to me as email attachments (Word documents or PDFs) and post them the day before class on D2L. Do not post a discussion question on the same day as a reading response; choose one or the other type of response to the reading. Do not post a discussion question on the week you facilitate class, but you may post a reading response that week as long as it doesn't duplicate material you've presented in class. Do not post a reading response that duplicates your article review.

### About Class Facilitations

Working in pairs, you will be responsible for leading a class on an assigned reading. Facilitations may take many forms. You may present historical and contextual material on our readings, summarize published scholarship, offer your own analysis of a text(s), ask questions and lead discussion, design a group activity, or combine several of these things. Student-led facilitations will last approximately 45 minutes. I will pass around a sign-up sheet on the first day of class so you may choose the readings you wish to help facilitate. More information is available on D2L.

### Turning in Assignments

Assignments should be submitted through the digital dropbox on D2L, posted in a D2L discussion forum, or delivered by email. See the assignment details for information on which of those methods to use.

### Late Assignments

You have the option of submitting one of the D2L discussion contributions up to four days late without penalty. Other assignments may be submitted late only with permission. My general policy for late assignments is to lower the grade by a third for each late day (i.e., an A paper that is one day late will receive an A-, two days late a B+, and so on; weekend days and holidays are counted in this total).

### Academic Integrity

This course, like all courses at the University of Calgary, holds students to high standards of honest and responsible scholarship. Please consult the [Academic Integrity website](#) for a detailed description of university policies, which will be enforced in this course. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Associate Dean of Arts for a ruling.

Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of another person as their own. Another equally serious form of plagiarism occurs when a student submits something they have written themselves for credit in two or more courses without first securing written permission from all those course instructors. Consequences for plagiarism include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

### Deferral of Term Work and Final Examinations

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an [Application of Deferment of Term Work](#) must be completed. It is the

student's responsibility to initiate this process with the instructor. The University also has regulations governing the [deferral of final examinations](#).

#### Grade Appeals

To pursue a Reassessment of Graded Term Work or a Reappraisal of an Academic Assessment, consult the [University Calendar](#) and request advice from the English Department at [engl@ucalgary.ca](mailto:engl@ucalgary.ca). Please note that mere dissatisfaction with a grade is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

#### English Department Website

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English.

#### Scribe and Muse Club for English Students

The [Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club](#) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. Our email address is [smecuofc@gmail.com](mailto:smecuofc@gmail.com).

#### Writing Support

The [Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

#### Academic Regulations and Schedules

#### Student Academic Accommodations

The Student Accessibility Services website is available [here](#). University accommodation policies can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

[Program Advising and Student Information Resources](#) is done through the Faculty of Arts Students' Centre. Office location: SS102; phone: 403-220-3580; email: [ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca); website: <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>

#### Instructor's Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors, including presentations, posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams, remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

#### Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty and teaching assistants. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

#### Sexual Violence Policy

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence-Policy.pdf>

#### Other Important Information

- [Wellness and Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Student Success](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [Student Union \(SU\) Information](#)
- [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) Information](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points](#)
- [Safewalk](#)

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI)

Please participate in [USRI Surveys](#) toward the end of the course. The feedback they provide helps us evaluate teaching, enhance student learning, and guide students as they select courses.