“The Future of American Democracy” is a lecture/seminar course open to undergraduate students (Political Science 475M) and graduate students (Political Science 575M) for alphabetically-graded credit.

(Alternatively, a variation of this course—“America’s National Experiment in Democratic Ideals”, PSC 476M and PSC 576M—may be taken for pass-fail credit. Students may enroll in either course, but not both. Consult with Instructor for details and proper registration.)

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This syllabus and additional information regarding ”The Future of American Democracy” (including updates) are available on JSU’s website at:
The Course:

“The Future of American Democracy”—a special Jacksonville State University offering as part of its Eminent Scholars Program—is a provocative assessment of America’s national experiment in democratic ideals. Dr. Glen Browder, drawing largely upon his academic, political, and personal background, will challenge conventional thinking about America with critical but constructive analysis.

The course will combine three different educational elements: (1) Dr. Browder will share, in a series of public lectures, his unconventional analysis of the current state and future prospects of American democracy; (2) he and enrolled students will engage in seminars on American democracy; and (3) he will direct individualized student research projects on American democracy.

The general public is invited to attend the lectures, which will be presented in various forums throughout Alabama. Tentatively scheduled are Anniston (September 9), Huntsville (September 16), Birmingham (September 23), Montgomery (September 30), and Mobile (October 7). Dr. Browder and enrolled students will convene at JSU for their seminars.

Enrolled students (in PSC 475M-575M and the alternative PSC 476M-576M) will be expected to bring to this course requisite background and commitment commensurate with their academic expectations—either alphabetical credit or pass-fail credit—with each student’s final grade based on enrollment status and participation as follows. For successful alphabetical credit (“A”, “B”, “C”, or “D”) in PSC 475M-575M, the student must attend at least two of the public forums and three-fourths of the class meetings, engage in the seminars, and complete an individualized research project (a 10-page paper). For “pass” credit in PSC 476M-576M, the student must attend at least two of the public forums and three-fourths of the class meetings, engage in seminars based on the course text, and contribute in some meaningful manner to the research projects. Of course, anyone in the JSU community is encouraged to audit the course or to attend selected lectures and class meetings in accord with university policy.

Course Text:


Course Outline, Schedule, and Meeting Site:
The class will meet for twelve seminars—on Tuesdays from 6:15-9:15 p.m. in Merrill Hall Auditorium (Room 250)—according to the following course outline. Some adjustments in the outline, schedule, and meeting site may have to be made during the semester.

**Tuesday, September 3, 2002**

Introduction to course.  
“Browder’s Thesis of American Democracy” (Text p. 1)  
Discussion of individualized course projects.  
Class assignments for next meeting.

**Tuesday, September 10, 2002**

“Is America Dying?”  
(An unconventional analysis of transforming American democracy.)  
(Chapter One in text, pp. 5-26)

A. The American national dream is turning into national democratic distemper.  
B. It is time for a Tocquevillian assessment of the “Great Experiment” of American democracy.  
C. The objective: “To learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress.”

**Tuesday, September 17, 2002**

“How Dare I Ask Such An Outrageous Question About America?”  
(The discomforting venture of a veteran politician, political scientist, and “American Dreamer”)  
(Chapter Two in text, pp. 27-44)

A. A political-academic-personal introduction.  
B. The discomforting nature of my rhetorical inquiry.

**Tuesday, September 24, 2002**

“A Systems Theory of Transformational America.”  
(What do I mean by “America”, “American Democracy”, and “Dying”?)  
(Chapter Three in text, pp. 45-64)

A. “America”: A national experiment in democratic ideals.
B. “American Democracy”: The magical mix of people, politics, and government through which we pursue democratic ideals.

C. “Dying”: American democracy no longer works the way it used to, and we seem to be tiring of the Great Experiment itself.

D. A systems theory of transformational America.

**Tuesday, October 1, 2002**

“Propositional Observations of Transforming American Democracy.”
(Why and how—arguably—is America dying?)
(Chapter Four in text, pp. 65-80)

Propositional Observation Number One:
“The favorable systemic environment of American democracy has disappeared.”

1. Our original, open, natural environment encouraged freedom, individualism, and independence—but that environment closed long ago.

2. The popular expansion of national public authority fostered equality, security and justice—but that expansion appears to have reached its limits.

3. America’s next democratic frontier?

4. America’s historic democratic boom may—or may not—have busted.

**Tuesday, October 8, 2002**

Propositional Observation Number Two:
“We have entrapped American democracy within a philosophical civil war.”
(Chapter Five in text, pp. 81-100)

1. America is engaged in a philosophical civil war over democratic ideals, cultural values, and principles of governance.

2. We now are conducting an intense national debate over America’s basic cultural values (“culture wars”).

3. We also are re-examining our traditional system of limited
representative governance ("neopopulist democratization").

4. This is a different and ominous challenge for American democracy.

**Tuesday, October 15, 2002**

Propositional Observation Number Three:
“American democracy no longer works the way it has in the past.”
(Chapter Six in text, pp. 101-128)

1. The American people are losing their civic virtue.

2. The political machinery of American democracy is broken.

3. American government is functioning in unacceptable manner.

4. We are witnessing the revolutionary rise of “electronic democracy”.

5. Demographic, economic, and technological trends are exacerbating our political troubles.


**Tuesday, October 22, 2002**

Propositional Observation Number Four:
“America seems to be tiring of its historic Great Experiment.”
(Chapter Seven in text, pp. 129-148)

1. The American people evidence mixed commitment to their national democratic endeavor.

2. The American polity increasingly inclines toward alternative ideas about governance.

3. Tired America appears to be questioning the Great Experiment at a critical point in American history.

**Tuesday, October 29, 2002**

“How Serious Is America’s Democratic Illness?”
(Systemic realities and alternative scenarios.)
A. America apparently has reached a critical juncture of systemic destiny.

B. Conventional assurances of American democracy’s enduring strength.

C. Unconventional interpretations of democratic destiny.


**Tuesday, November 5, 2002**

“What Might America Look Like—if We Continue Our Current Course—in 2050?” (A speculative projection: “The American Federation”)

(Chapter Nine in text, pp. 167-186)

A. Centrifugal dynamics are reshaping the American political system.

B. A contemporary vision of our democratic future (the California analogy).

C. America may become “The American Federation” by the middle of the Twenty-First Century.

**Tuesday, November 12, 2002**

“The Future of American Democracy?”

(The challenge of “New America”)

(Chapter Ten in text, pp. 187-216)

A. A transformational review.

B. A transformational juncture (Election 2000).

C. A transformational challenge (“National Democratic Renaissance”).

D. And some transformational predictions about the evolving direction of American democracy.

E. An even greater Democratic Experiment?

F. “Quelle Grand Expérience!”
Tuesday, November 19, 2002

Student Presentations

Additional activity for enrolled students may be scheduled by Dr. Browder

READING MATERIAL.

All students are expected to read and understand the appropriate parts of the course text prior to each seminar. In addition, the following list includes reading material which the instructor considers pertinent to the public lecture series and seminars. Students are not expected to read all of these materials. However, specific materials will be assigned to individual students for reports back to the class; and students may find this list useful in their individualized course projects.


Bush, George W.  “Inaugural Address” (January 20, 2001).


Crabtree, Susan.  “CBC Lashes Out At Bush”, in Roll Call (December 18, 2000).


Crozier, Michel, Joji Watanuki, and Samuel P. Huntington.  The Crisis of Democracy Report on


Hodge, Carl Cavanagh. All of the People, All of the Time: American Government at the End of


Ingraham, Laura.  “Who’s Your Candidate?”, in The Los Angeles Times (November 6, 2000).


Kettl, Donald F. “Is the Past Prologue?” in Governing (December, 2000).


Key, V.O., Jr. “Public Opinion and the Decay of Democracy,” Virginia Quarterly Review


Lawrence, Jill. “Country vs. City, Spelled in Red, Blue”, in USA Today (November 9, 2000).


   Houghton Mifflin.


National Commission on Civic Renewal.  “*A Nation of Spectators*” (June, 1998).


South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press.


Progressive Policy Institute.


Raach, Chuck. “Divided We Stand, And Have Stood For A While”, in USA Today (November 20, 2000).


Shaefer, Byron, Joel H. Silbey, Michael Barone, Charles O. Jones, Alan Ehrenhald, and Ed


Tocqueville, Alexis de. Democracy in America (The Henry Reeve text as revised by Francis Bowen, now further corrected and edited, with introduction, editorial notes, and bibliographies by Phillips Bradley; 1951). Alfred A. Knopf.


Turner, Frederick J.  The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893, 1920).  
Frederick Unger.


Washington, George. “First Inaugural Address” (April 30, 1789).


Will, George F. “Had ‘Em All the Way”, in Newsweek (November 27, 2000).


