Democracy and disobedience have a troubled relationship in the history of political thought. According to Western and modern traditions, democracy permits freedom of speech and practice, but within limits. Democracy, like other forms of government, requires obedience to its rule. Without widespread consent and cooperation at the level of the law, there could be no stable democratic institutions within which to enjoy liberties of opinion and participation. The predominant view over many centuries has been that states require total obedience to their sovereign authority, even democracies, whatever other rights and freedoms they may permit their citizens within those parameters. On the other hand, rival traditions maintain that civil disobedience and unruly opposition are sometimes necessary in order to preserve and strengthen democratic governance. Breaking the law, according to this alternative view (which has become more accepted in recent years), is sometimes an ethical imperative and can be a constructive form of democratic action.

Along these lines, the course is divided into two sections. The first section covers basic conceptualizations of democracy and democratic principles, including the strict view that there are no exceptions to the duty to obey the law. The second (and larger) section of the course explores arguments about the conditions under which civil disobedience and ‘acting otherwise’ becomes justifiable, including arguments from classical republican, liberal, and more transformative traditions.

This is an ideas-based course. It engages with theoretical debates through a series of required readings, lectures, and discussions. Readings are drawn mostly, but not entirely, from canonical texts of Western political philosophy, including selections from Plato, Machiavelli, Mill, Thoreau, Gandhi, Foucault, Tully, and others. All required readings are available online, and links will be provided. The aim of the course is not to settle perennial debates, but to better understand the complexities and contradictions inherent in democracy and disobedience.

This is not a current affairs course, although lectures and discussions will often raise examples from contemporary cases around the world, in addition to historical cases (and student papers are welcome to include case studies). Our major focus however is locating underlying issues and tensions within the dominant strands of Western political thought. Even as the world becomes increasingly globalized, with rising knowledges of the Global South and Indigenous peoples, European traditions matter. They warrant study, in conjunction with alternative approaches, in order to better understand the diminished but persistent foundations of Western political society.
COURSE SCHEDULE

The course and required readings are divided into two sections, with two subsections each, for a total of four subsections. Four respective Reading Packs compile access to the readings plus brief commentaries situating each. The first Reading Pack is available on CourseSpaces, and the remaining three will be provided within a few weeks. The following schedule is an outline only, subject to change, and students must consult the Reading Packs for the required readings.

Section 1 – Democracy and Obedience (five weeks: Jan. 6 – Feb. 6)

The topics and readings of Section 1 serve two primary purposes: first (1.a) reviewing the complex and problematic idea of democracy, going back to its origins more than two thousand years ago, and second (1.b) zeroing in on the dominant discourse of the necessity of ultimate obedience to the state.

Reading Pack 1.a – Meanings of democracy (background and review)
(Available on CourseSpaces)
- Bernard Crick, Democracy: A Very Short Introduction (selections)
- Michael Saward, “Representative Democracy and Direct Democracy”
- Plato, Apology
- J. S. Mill, On Liberty (selections)

Reading Pack 1.b – Arguments about obedience
(Available on CourseSpaces by second week)
- Plato, Crito
- Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”
- Hobbes, Leviathan (brief selections)
- Rousseau, Social Contract (brief selections)

Section 2 – Democracy and Disobedience (seven weeks: Feb. 10 – Apr. 2)

The topics and readings of Section 2 explore counter-discourses that emphasise the necessity of contesting power, even the law and the state as such. The readings first (2.a) explore classical and modern conceptions of contestatory citizenship and civil disobedience, from republican and liberal perspectives respectively. Then (2.b), the readings turn to conceptions of disobedience that go beyond the state paradigm into more transformative politics.

Reading Pack 2.a – Disobedience in republican and liberal traditions (reform)
(Available on CourseSpaces by third week)
- Machiavelli, Discourses (selections)
- Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”
- Rawls (selections)
- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Reading Pack 2.b – Disobedience beyond the state (transformation)
(Available on CourseSpaces by fourth week)
- Celikates, “Learning from the Streets”
- Sharp, From Dictatorship to Democracy (selections)
- Gandhi (selections)
- Tully, “On Global Citizenship”
- Asch, Borrows, Tully, Resurgence and Reconciliation (selections)
- Foucault, “The Subject and Power”
COURSE FORMAT

Classes are structured around a lecture/presentation of the day’s topic, usually reviewing the reading, plus discussion. Lectures make use of PowerPoint presentations and other media, including short videos, which will typically be made available on CourseSpaces (though the slides are no substitute for attending class). The content of the lectures sometimes varies from the content of the readings, so regular attendance is required. Students are expected to complete the day’s readings before class, in order to increase comprehension and facilitate engagement, discussion, and retention. Students should also take notes while reading, during class, and review these notes, as well as readings and class slides, throughout the term.

EVALUATION AND COURSE COMPONENTS

Required course components (all components must be completed to pass):

10% Participation
15% Midterm Exam (Thursday, February 13)
30% Final Exam (date TBD)
15% Paper proposal and bibliography (due Monday, March 16 or earlier)
30% Paper (due Friday, April 3)

Participation (attendance + engagement = 10%):

Regular attendance is expected and tracked. Students who miss a third or more of total classes may require special documentation (medical or university) in order to be eligible to pass the course. Absences will directly impact the participation grade, and indirectly impact other grade components, which depend on familiarity with the lessons, especially the exams. Attendance is worth half of this grade, and the other half is based on engagement. Engagement means measured participation, which means sharing thoughts or questions relevant to the material at appropriate opportunities and without impeding the participation or course learning experience of other students.

Midterm Exam (3 questions x 5 points each = 15%):

The midterm exam will be written in class (80 minutes) on Thursday, February 13. You will choose three questions from a list of five or six. Each question is worth 5% of your midterm exam grade (3 questions x 5 points = 15%). No notes or devices are permitted during the writing of the exam. Short answers are expected, a single strong paragraph or a few short paragraphs, like mini essays. The questions require you to demonstrate an understanding of course concepts and familiarity with the readings, with clear and analytical writing.

Final Exam (3 questions x 10 points each = 30%):

The final exam criteria are the same as the midterm exam: 80 minutes to answer three questions from a choice of five or six, except each question is worth twice as much as the midterm questions (3 questions x 10 points = 30%). The exam will cover material from the entire course, focusing especially on the topics and readings of Section 2. The final exam will be written in April, after the last class (date to be determined by the Department early in the semester).
Paper Proposal and Bibliography (10 + 5 = 15%)
The purpose of this assignment is to set the groundwork for a major paper. Submit a one-page proposal, indicating topic, thesis, and approach (worth 10 points) plus a properly formatted bibliography of 8-12 sources (worth 5 points). More detailed information about this assignment, plus suggested topics, will be provided in the coming weeks. The assignment is due Monday, March 16 (or earlier) via CourseSpaces (MS Word files only).

Term Paper (30%)
You are required to develop a social science paper with an original argument or significant claim (thesis) concerning ideas and practices of democracy and disobedience. Example research topics, along with detailed criteria, will be provided early in the term. It is expected but not required that your paper follow your proposal (you are not bound by your proposal, if your research takes you in other directions). Topic options are broad, and you are encouraged to develop your own topic (with instructor approval). The paper must meet specific criteria. It must pertain to core themes of the course. It must take a social-science approach (original argument + thoughtful analysis + research and sourcing of academic sources + clarity of writing and proper grammar). The paper must include a title page and be double spaced, between 3000 and 4000 words (plus or minus about 500 words), adhering to Chicago Manual of Style, ¹ with either in-text references or footnotes (other standard citation styles may be used, if used consistently). All references should include specific page numbers. The paper must include a Works Cited list at the end. The paper must cite at least eight scholarly sources (all required readings count as scholarly sources, but your paper must include at least five scholarly sources that are not from the required readings). You are also encouraged to use other kinds of sources, in addition to scholarly sources, as relevant to your topic (e.g., governments or NGOs, news media, pop culture, social media, etc.). Due April 3, the day after our last class, via CourseSpaces (MS Word files only). Late papers will be penalized 3% (of 100) per day.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- First class: Monday, January 6
- Midterm Exam Thursday, February 13
- Reading Break: week of February 17–21
- Paper proposal and bibliography due
- Last class: Thursday, April 2
- Paper due: Friday, April 3
- Final exam: TBD between April 6 and April 24

Relevant administrative dates:

- Sunday, January 19 – last day for 100% refund for drop
- Sunday, February 9 – last day for 50% refund for drop
- Saturday, February 29 – last day to drop classes without penalty of failure

¹ https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution - Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student’s transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found on pages 45-48 of the undergraduate calendar.

Read more: https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/

CENTRE for ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (CAL)

The University of Victoria offers programs and support for students challenged by learning difficulties. If you require special accommodations, please contact the professor at the beginning of the course, if you have not already, or the Centre for Accessible Learning: https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/

COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.
**UVic PERCENTAGE GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grades</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exceptional, outstanding</strong> and <strong>excellent</strong> performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Very good, good</strong> and <strong>solid</strong> performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong>, or <strong>minimally satisfactory</strong>. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marginal</strong> Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failing Grades</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Unsatisfactory</strong> performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A percentage grade for an N grade should be assigned in the following manner:
- **N grade percentage range 0-49**: In cases where a student who has not completed the exam or has not completed the course requirements but has submitted course requirements that total more than 49% of the total grade for a course, an instructor will assign a percentage grade of 49%.