Is democracy best conceived as the constraint of potentially tyrannical power, or as the exercise of popular sovereignty? Is it best imagined as an institutional form, or as an unruly force that necessarily challenges institutional authority? What is the relationship between democracy and economic inequality? Between democracy and constitutional law? In this seminar we shall consider such questions obliquely, by following the development, over more than four decades, of the work of two eminent American scholars, Sheldon Wolin and Robert Dahl. Near-contemporaries, trained and employed in the same field, Wolin and Dahl have nevertheless made little reference to each other’s work, and their spheres of influence in contemporary democratic theory do not much overlap. At one level, then, the seminar is meant to stage a much-needed encounter between what might be called “radical” and “mainstream” democratic theory; yet it should also help us reflect critically on the adequacy of those labels, and also to understand how the substance of twentieth-century democratic theory has been shaped by arguments about what “theory” is, about its place in the academic discipline of political science, and about the relationship between democratic politics and the institutionalized expert cultures of political theory and political science. This course is primarily for Ph.D. students in the Department of Political Science, although applications from students in other fields are welcome; enrollment will be limited and instructor consent required.

TEXTS: The following books will be available for purchase at the Seminary Coop and will be on reserve in Regenstein. Other readings are available on JSTOR, on Regenstein e-reserve, or (in two cases) via other electronic databases, and are designated accordingly.

Robert Dahl, *Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago)
Robert Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (Yale)
Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (2nd ed., Yale)
Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, expanded edition (Princeton; note that you must have the expanded edition for this course)
Sheldon Wolin, *The Presence of the Past* (Johns Hopkins)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: A 15–20 page seminar paper, due Friday, June 9, on a topic of your choice, designed in consultation with me.

WEEKLY MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. March 31. Introductory meeting (no readings)
2. April 7. Dahl: *Preface* and Predecessors

1. Dahl, *Preface to Democratic Theory* (all)

3. April 14. Wolin: *Politics and Vision*


5. April 28. Wolin: Theory and Democracy

6. May 5: Dahl: Confronting Capitalism
   1. Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (all)

7. May 12: Wolin: Confronting Reagan
   1. Wolin, *Presence of the Past*, chaps. 1, 8, 9, 11

   1. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (all)


10. May 31: Legacies, responses, exceptions [tentative!]