The final quarter of the Democracy core grapples with the possibilities of, and challenges, to
democratic government in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The readings sustain the
concern for close textual analysis and historical inquiry established earlier in the sequence, but
introduce systematic attention to the uses of comparison, both over time and across nations.

The quarter will begin with the debates over national self-determination and the possibility of
democracy that proliferated in the decades from the First through the Second World War.
Students will consider the normative case made for rights to self-determination (celebrated by
figures such as Woodrow Wilson but recognized as a threat to class-based revolution by Rosa
Luxemburg) as well as arguments by those skeptical of the possibility or desirability of a more
inclusive and participatory democratic regime. Key readings for the first weeks of class will
include arguments that identify the dangers in defining the *demos* or people in ways that enable
despotism or even genocide.

John Dewey *The Public and Its Problems* or *Liberalism and Social Action*

Carl Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*

Despite these risks of democracy, democratic regimes multiplied and deepened in the decades
after World War II. During the middle weeks of the quarter, we will address two dimensions of
this democratic expansion: the development of the modern welfare state as a democratic
response to capitalist economies and the diffusion of the democratic form globally. Both
developments confronted the challenge of how to define the *demos* as abstract principles of
equality confronted deeply entrenched understandings of difference and exclusion. Possible
readings include:

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* or *The Constitution of Liberty*

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny* or “The American Abyss”

Atlantic Charter, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Nehru’s (1936) speech
on moving beyond “the western pattern”

Selections representing modernization theory, the New Nations Project (e.g. Seymour
Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and
Political Legitimacy” [1959]; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture; Robert Dahl on democracy).


Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots,” “The Ballot or the Bullet,” in Malcolm X Speaks, George Breitman, ed.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Plan (http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm),


The final weeks of the quarter turn to the present and future of democratic politics. Readings consider the implications of resurgent ethnonationalism and varieties of populist politics as well as the erosion of key democratic institutions. This section will address contemporary cases of democratic backsliding and reconstruction. Possible readings include:


Arlie Hochschild, Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right.


