



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Political Science

Syllabus

Democracy - theories, practices and dilemmas

Course Code:	SVAM10
Course Title:	Democracy - theories, practices and dilemmas <i>Demokrati - teorier, praktiker och dilemman</i>
Credits:	7.5
Degree Level:	Master's level
Progressive Specialisation:	Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements (A1N)

Major Field of Study:
SKA (Political Science)

Course Approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2026-03-04, and is valid from the Autumn semester 2026 at Karlstad University.

Prerequisites

90 credits completed in a social science subject, including at least 30 credits at the G2F level or higher, including a degree project worth 15 credits. Upper secondary level Swedish 3 and English 6, or Swedish level 3 and English level 2.

An equivalence assessment can be made.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to

1. identify and give an account of central aspects and concepts related to different traditions of democracy theory,
2. problematise the relation between democracy as theory and democracy in practice, and
3. give an account of and reflect critically upon current democratic dilemmas in terms of various theoretical perspectives on democracy.

Content

The course introduces and problematises different theoretical views on democracy based on Robert Dahl's seminal work *On Democracy*, which informs discussions of key dilemmas for democratic governments in terms of content, procedures, and practices. Central aspects covered in the course are views of demos and the citizen, and the relation between democracy, politics, and governance regarding democratic dilemmas such as authoritarian tendencies, automation and digitalisation, as well as globalisation and marketisation. Towards the end of the course, theoretical arguments about democracy are related to current democratic challenges and dilemmas. The students select a contemporary case of democracy under threat, for example in relation to "fake news" and other forms of manipulation.

Instruction is in the form of lectures and seminars. Some of the seminars are chaired by students.

Reading List

See separate document.

Examination

Learning outcome 1 is assessed on the basis of individual short written papers, presented and discussed in seminars. Learning outcomes 2 and 3 are assessed on the basis of an individual written assignment and an individual oral examination.

The examiner may decide that a student who is very close to a passing grade can complete a supplementary assignment to receive a passing grade for a specific examination. If this is a possibility, the students must be informed in writing no later than the start of the course, and the examiner must specify when and how such a supplementary assignment may be permitted.

If students have a decision from Karlstad University entitling them to Targeted Study Support due to a documented disability, the examiner has the right to give such students an adapted examination or to examine them in a different manner.

Grades

One of the grades Pass with Distinction (VG), Pass (G), or Fail (U) is awarded in the examination of the course.

Quality Assurance

Follow-up relating to learning conditions and goal-fulfilment takes place both during and upon completion of the course in order to ensure continuous improvement. Course evaluation is partly based on student views and experiences obtained in accordance with current regulations and partly on other data and documentation. Students will be informed of the result of the evaluation and of any measures to be taken.

Course Certificate

A course certificate will be provided upon request.

Additional information

The local regulations for studies at the Bachelor's and Master's levels at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.