Democracy and Justice

Section: 03—November  Semester: Fall 2013

Days and Times: Mondays to Fridays, 9-12 Location: 323 Academic Bldg.
Instructor: Eric Gorham
Office: 420 Academic Building
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E-mail: eric.gorham@questu.ca
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2 PM and by appointment

3. **Course Description.**

Democracy and Justice examines the ideas of leading thinkers in the history of political thought and the questions they raise about the design of the political and social order. It considers the ways in which these thinkers have responded to the particular political problems of their day, and how they contribute to a broader conversation about human goods and needs, justice, democracy, and the relationship of the individual to the state.

This course fulfills a social science requirement within the foundation program.

4. **Reading Materials.**

- Plato, *Crito*
- Shirley Jackson, *The Lottery*
- C.B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*
- James Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*
- José Saramago, *Blindness*
I would also like to suggest that you read consistently at least one of the following newspapers/magazines/media outlets to stay current on national and world events: Globe and Mail, Maclean’s, The Walrus, Montreal Gazette, Le Devoir, CBC, NPR, New York Times

Viewing Materials.

On Day Twelve we will view and discuss Alfred Hitchcock’s film Lifeboat (1944). If you want to preview the film, it is available for purchase or rent from on-line video rental services such as netflix.com. Alas, Squamish video stores do not carry copies of the film. If you find any stores in the Vancouver area that do, please let me know! A copy is also on reserve at the library.

5. Learning Outcomes.

Quest University Canada learning outcomes: evaluate texts, develop arguments, operate well in teams, foster written and oral communication skills, employ available search mechanisms to find data, evaluate sources, analyze and discuss ethical practices, articulate connections between disciplines, and identify civic rights and commitments.

Course learning outcomes: understand more deeply the significance and meaning of democratic institutions and culture, different theories of justice, and the practical application of political theory.

Please also note that in conjunction with the Writing Across the Curriculum program, there may be some in-class activities designed to help students reinforce the writing skills they learned in Rhetoric.


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<tr>
<th>METHOD OF ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSED AND ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>DAY DUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review Essay Four pages</td>
<td>• Written communication skills, evaluate texts, develop arguments&lt;br&gt;• Students are required to review C.B. Macpherson’s analysis of democracy in The Real World of Democracy</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab democracy study 30 minute oral presentation</td>
<td>• Use available search mechanisms to find relevant data, evaluate sources, oral communication skills, operate well in teams&lt;br&gt;• Students are required to investigate and present to the class an analysis of the possibility of democracy in a country in North Africa or the Middle East</td>
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<td>20</td>
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They must argue if there is a possibility that the country will become more democratic as a result of the “Arab Spring” of 2011. Students will work in groups for this presentation and justify in writing sources they use for their research.

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<tr>
<th>Individual Project</th>
<th>Four page analytical essay</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written communication skills, evaluate texts, develop arguments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students write a short analytical essay comparing theories of justice in <em>Blindness</em> and <em>Lifeboat</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Student Group Projects</th>
<th>Eight pages written assignment and 15 minute oral presentation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral communication skills, develop arguments, analyze and discuss ethical practices, identify civic rights and commitments, use available search mechanisms to find relevant data, operate well in teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In this exercise students work together to design a democratically-based student organization for Quest. This organization must follow decision procedures and rules that are just. Students must argue for the importance of the group and defend its procedures as just.</td>
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<td>A service-learning option is available for this assignment—see page 13 for details.</td>
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<th>Participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral communication skills, identify civic rights and commitments, analyze and discuss ethical practices</td>
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Additional details about all these assignments are provided below on pages 9-12.

7. Course Policies.

   a) Assignments. *All papers must be typed and double-spaced in .doc or .docx format, 12-point font and 1” margins. I do not accept papers that do not conform to these requirements. I do not accept papers after the beginning of the class period in which they are due. I will not read any pages that go beyond the page limit required.* I am interested in how well you can write and I grade the form as well as the content of your exams and essays. You will lose marks on all assignments for bad grammar and improper syntax. You will also lose marks for bad spelling and typographical errors on the paper. Submit all assignments by email using attachments labeled with your last name first (e.g., “Smith, John—Macpherson Paper”).

   All essays in this class require a thesis that you set out to justify: if you a) don't have a thesis, and/or b) do not justify it well or adequately, then you will lose many marks. The best way to prevent the loss of all of the above marks is to outline, write, edit, re-write, and proofread your papers very
carefully. If you have difficulty in writing essays, see the learning commons and me, and have others go over your drafts with you. For further detail, see the accompanying “guidelines” for writing.

If English is not your native language, then you will not lose points for “ESL” mistakes. Please note that certain aspects of poor writing, such as the absence of a thesis statement or a disorganized essay, are not the result of ESL deficiencies. However, as I do for all students in the class, I expect all non-native speaking English students to improve their grammar and syntax with each successive paper.

b) Grading Policy. All work is graded on a letter grade scale. Where group projects are graded, all students in that group will receive the same grade. For those who wish to convert letter grades into numerical ones, my grading scale is as follows:

- A      92-100
- A-     88-91
- B+     85-87
- B      82-84
- B-     78-81
- C+     75-78
- C      70-74
- C-     67-69
- D      55-66
- F      54 and under

To see the values I use to calculate your final grade and how your final grade influences your grade point average, see the Academic Calendar, page 21. I will offer an additional oral narrative evaluation on the last day of class—please let me know by Day 16 if you wish this extra meeting.

c) Completing the course. You must complete all assignments. If you fail to complete all assignments, and have not arranged for an Incomplete, then you will receive an "F" for the course. I strongly discourage arranging Incompletes and will consider them on a case-by-case basis. If you fail to complete the work necessary to remove the incomplete from your record by the appropriate due date, you will receive an “F” for the course.

d) Academic Integrity. Anyone caught cheating on exams or plagiarizing papers will receive an "F" for the course. Presenting material as your own from books, newspapers, magazines, others’ emails, or (especially) the Internet is plagiarism/cheating. If you are uncertain about this definition, see me and we will discuss it. For more details, please see the Quest honour constitution and Forms of Writing, 139-143. I know how to research and uncover plagiarized essays via the Internet.

e) Participation. A significant part of the course is class participation, because we will deliberate about the issues these authors raise. Come to class every day and be prepared to discuss the material with your fellow students. Please be aware of everything on the course management site as well. I reserve the right to hold unannounced quizzes or exams if I feel that members of the class are not preparing adequately for the class.
Class Participation Rubric:

A: Engages in group discussions, sustains interest in the topic, actively thinks and participates in each class period. Comments show a high level of synthesis, with some keen linkages or connections. Thoroughly understands the readings and can easily apply the readings to other unrelated topics. Student also supports learning for other students who are not as academically strong and demonstrates an important leadership position in small group discussions and also in class discussion.

A-: Students who do not consistently do all of the above but are still strong in each area.

B+: Engaged in group discussions, generally interested in the topic, seems like they are thinking during lecture periods or class discussion, frequently participates, and shows some level of synthesis or critical thinking in their thoughts and ideas. Alternatively, this can be someone who makes great points in class, but also ignores other students or occasionally talks too much off topic.

B: Someone who seems engaged in group discussions, asks occasional questions, rarely participates in class discussions. This is the default grade for students who simply show up and pay attention all the time. All grades at this level or above require a consistent effort to understand the reading material.

B-: Contributes very little to discussions and does not seem to pay attention all the time. The student appears not to read consistently well all the time.

C: Comes to class regularly, but occasionally comes to class unprepared and contributes little to small group or bigger group discussions. A + or – can be added to the grade depending on my further impressions of the student’s contributions and/or whether the student distracts others or disrupts the flow of class discussion.

D: Does not come to class consistently, comes unprepared, contributes very little to classroom discussion, and/or disrupts class.

F: Either the student cannot fog a mirror or s/he has come to class so little that I don’t even recognize him/her. An “F” in class participation = an “F” for the whole course. Don’t go there.

f) Attendance. There is no required attendance policy for your course. You will have to make up your own mind whether or not it is in your best interest to attend every day. I humbly suggest that it is. For more information please note the participation rubric above.

f) University Calendar Dates. It is your responsibility to be aware of all add/drop and withdrawal dates for the block. Please see the academic calendar and timetable for this information.

h) Classroom Computer Policy. Students may use computers in class for the following purposes: note-taking, exam-writing, in-class essay writing, and in-class research for topics directly relevant to course topics. Students are expected never to view screens irrelevant to the course during class (I will
be the judge of what is irrelevant). I reserve the right to confiscate for the class period the laptop computers of any students who violate this principle. I also reserve the right to forbid any student from bringing laptops to the classroom if this rule is violated repeatedly (I am the judge of what “repeatedly” may mean). I also reserve the right to forbid the use of computers in class if I feel that they are detrimental to class discussion. You only need computers for class purposes on days 1, 3, 4, and 18.

i) Grammatical E-mails. Whenever you email me you must use proper forms of address, punctuation, grammar, and syntax. Good writing begins with everyday practices, and I will be judging your writing abilities in the emails that you send me.

j) Video Projector. If you are giving a presentation in class and need to use the video projector you are responsible for learning how to connect it to your computer. I can secure the projector for you but I cannot provide technical assistance to you. Please note this well in advance of your presentation.

k) Re-writes. I will be pleased to review any papers you wish to re-write in this class at any time. I will not, however, change the grade I gave you originally as a result of this review. I adhere to this policy to encourage you to improve your writing for its own sake, rather than as a means to another end (e.g., a higher grade).

l) Cell phones. If your cell phone goes off in class at any time, I reserve the right to answer your cell phone for you. I also reserve the right to greet the caller in any manner of my choosing.

m) Food policy. No food or drinks in the classroom. I will confiscate any food or drink I believe is appropriate—and keep it for myself or give it away to some needy soul!

n) Classroom maintenance. Please keep the classroom clean every day. This means always removing refuse and recyclables at the end of each class session. I may periodically ask that, as a group we clean the classroom together.
8. **Tentative Block Schedule.** Please note that all reading, writing, and presentation assignments below reflect the day they are due.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic/Questions</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>What is Democracy?</td>
<td>Computer needed to view syllabus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Inis LeBlanc, <em>Squamish ReBuild</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Oct 29</td>
<td>What is Political Thinking?</td>
<td>Glenn Tinder, “Why Engage in Political Thinking?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>What is the significance of the Greek Polis in thinking about democracy and justice?</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Crito</em></td>
<td>Paragraph explaining choice of country to study</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before class, get hold of a <em>Map of Ancient Greece</em> here</td>
<td>Computer needed for the Map of Ancient Greece</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>How do people live democratically?</td>
<td>C.B. Macpherson, <em>The Real World of Democracy</em>, Chapters 1-3</td>
<td>Plan ahead for your paper due Wednesday—remember that with group projects there will be a lot due next week!</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Workshop with the Librarian on doing research for presentations on democracy in Arab states (<em>computer needed</em>)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Which political institutions constitute democracies?</td>
<td>C.B. Macpherson, <em>The Real World of Democracy</em>, Chapters 4-6</td>
<td>(Start thinking about which sorts of student groups you would like to create at Quest. Talk with other classmates and form teams of people with similar interests)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>What are the different kinds of democracy in the real world?</td>
<td>Guest speaker: David Eby, MLA, Point Grey (NDP)</td>
<td>Review Essay on Macpherson</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>What is participatory democracy?</td>
<td>Gelvin, <em>The Arab Uprisings</em>, pp. 1-92</td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Graham Fuller on Islam and Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>COMMUNITY DAY—Be Questy</td>
<td>Gelvin, <em>The Arab Uprisings</em>, pp. 93-158</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Nov 7</td>
<td>Democratizing the “real” world of democracy I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student presentations on Arab democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Democratizing the “real” world of democracy II</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student presentations on Arab democracy; Submit group members and plan for student organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Contextual Justice: how do we measure justice in particular situations? (Aristotle)</td>
<td>Review <em>Blindness</em> Norman Bowie and Robert Simon,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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| Nov 15 | Social and Economic Justice: how do people get an equitable share of the economic resources available to a political community? What would a just form of student government look like at Quest? | Presentation by Dean of Student Affairs  
Begin research on just/democratic organizational forms of student groups/government  
Essay on Blindness and Lifeboat                                                                 |
| Nov 18 | Student organizations, democracy, and justice                         | Group Projects—establishing democratic procedures for some student organizations at Quest  
Guest Speaker: Graham Fischer, President, SRC                                                                 |
| Nov 19 | Ideas for Student Organizations                                      | Group Presentations                                                                                                                        |
| Nov 20 | The Philosophical Business Plans                                     | **Computer needed** for course evaluation  
Philosophical Business Plan                                                                 |

**Overview of Topics**

Days 1-2: An introduction to the study of politics, highlighting the importance of ancient Greece in our thinking about democracy and justice.

Days 3-10: Discussions and activities revolving around the idea of democracy—its forms, institutions, principles, ethical foundations, etc.

Days 11-14: An introduction to different theories of justice to help students understand the concept from a variety of perspectives.

Days 15-18: Putting ideas into practice—taking themes in democracy and justice and attempting to establish student institutions at Quest that are both just and democratic.

**Assignments**

1) **Review Essay on The Real World of Democracy**: C.B. Macpherson wrote this book over 40 years ago, at the height of the Cold and Vietnam Wars and when there was a distinction between the First World and the Third World. So some of his ideas may seem outdated. Nonetheless reflect upon the basic conclusion of the work—namely that concept of
democracy is not the provenance of one set of countries. For Day Six, write an essay of no more than four pages considering the following question: What is Macpherson’s central argument about liberal democracy and do you agree with that argument? In order to answer this question you need to consider the following elements in your paper: According to Macpherson, why is the liberal model “unreal”? What, specifically, makes it “unreal” and how can we in the west make democracy more real for ourselves? Which advantages do non-liberal democracies have over liberal ones? Finally, do you agree with Macpherson’s conclusions? Why or why not? So, as a general guide to the structure of the paper:

a. State a coherent thesis in a well-developed thesis paragraph
b. Develop these ideas cohesively—don’t simply answer one of the above questions after another. If you do not understand this instruction, then please contact me and/or the Learning Commons.
c. Incorporate your own opinions into the argument—do not simply leave them to a final few sentences.
d. N.B. (nota bene—note this really, really well), these questions are different from other Macpherson assignments in any previous block.
e. Because I am asking you to assess the quality of Macpherson’s argument, construct the essay largely as a persuasive one with some expository elements in it—especially where you explain Macpherson’s ideas. In other words, persuade me that Macpherson’s argument is a good or bad one (or something in between).

2) Presentation on Democracy after the “Arab Spring” of 2011: This is a presentation where groups of students investigate and present to the class the likelihood that an Arab country of their choice will become more democratic in light of the events of January to May 2011 (and beyond) in North Africa and the Middle East. They must explain the government structure of the country before the revolutions of 2011, what triggered the revolutions, and whether or not there are prospects for greater democracy in that country. All research can be done through Internet sources, though you may find that actual books in the library can provide excellent background resources. The Gelvin book is an introduction to the topic and is insufficient to do passable (read anything above a “D”) work on this project. The project requires you as a group to take the following steps:

a. Choose a country in North Africa or the Middle East (geographically—anywhere from Morocco to Iran—you may not choose Israel, Iraq, or Afghanistan). Write a paragraph statement about why your group wishes to study this particular country, along with the names and addresses of at least three websites you will use to conduct your research. Submit this to me by Day Three. I will then either consent to this choice or recommend changes.
b. Research the 19th and 20th century colonial influences on that country and identify the structure of government that dominated the 20th century for that country. Explain why that country could not be considered democratic by using examples from at least three political institutions.
c. Research the events of the “Arab Spring” in that country and explain the chronology of events. Ask yourselves if broader structural changes have occurred because of these events.
d. Identify an organizing theme around which you will make a presentation. Consider this the “thesis” for the class presentation.

e. Make a case to your audience that the country will become either more democratic or will stay un-democratic because of these changes. You will need to present evidence to the class to make the case persuasively. This means answer a series of questions:

i. What makes a country more democratic?
ii. Is it the decision procedures used?
iii. Are there cultural bases in that country that help it foster democracy?
iv. What are the economic issues that have prevented the country from becoming more democratic in the past and do these problems still linger?
v. Examine and identify at least two political institutions to present as evidence here. Are these institutions permitting greater participation from the public? If so, what kind of participation? If not, how do you know this?
vi. What was the specific role of university students in the protests and in pushing for democratic change?

vii. Did women play a role in the events of the Arab Spring?

viii. Is power becoming decentralized among the people or is it still in the hands of a few? What evidence do you have for this?

ix. Do you think its future democratic institutions will work through direct participation by the people or by a system of representation? Why?
x. Does the general populace consider the government legitimate at present (i.e., one they accept and follow without coercion)? How do you know this?

xi. Is it a good idea to make the country more democratic? If not why not? If so, how would you advise the leadership of the country to do so?

This is very important: consider these questions, but as you make your presentations do not simply answer the questions one after the other. Work with your teammates to develop an argument that you want to persuade others to accept. So your task is to convince the class of the correctness of your argument. You will be given 30 minutes for your presentation during Days Nine and Ten, so be prepared by Day Nine. On the day of your presentation you will be required to email me a written justification for the three most important web resources you have used, based on categories provided to you by the Librarian. An example of how this has been done well will be distributed to you. I will not send you your evaluation until I receive this analysis. Please also see the policy on video projectors. Everyone in the group will receive the same grade and I will provide a written evaluation of your presentation.

3) Reflective essay on justice in literature. In an essay no longer than four pages, argue whether or not you believe the characters in both Blindness and Lifeboat treat each other in a just manner. How does distributive justice work in the novel and the film? Which goods and resources are being distributed? And who gets to do the distributing? Are the schemes of distribution fair in your estimation? (Is one fairer than the other?) Why or why not? If you were blind in the city or trapped in a lifeboat, what suggestions would you make to the groups about how to distribute scarce resources more fairly? Again, do not simply answer the questions in the order that you see them, but develop a coherent thesis statement and paragraph, and argue a point. Please cite evidence directly from the novel and the film to support your argument. Finally, be sure that you focus your argument on distributive justice.
and not retributive justice. (Hint: This essay can be structured as a compare and contrast essay). This essay is due on Day Fifteen.

4) **Planning democratic and just institutions at Quest University Canada.** We are a new university so you have the extraordinary opportunity to create the conditions of student life instead of merely acceding to the rules and regulations of the university. This course culminates in the attempt to develop “civil society” at Quest: student groups and societies reflecting your interests and ideals of democracy and justice. This exercise will not only help you think through student organizations we ought to have at Quest, but it will help you understand more deeply the theories we discuss in class. May I suggest a few steps:

a. Find students in the class who share similar interests and with whom you want to work to create a student organization or to reform and re-create an existing student organization. If you cannot find anyone, I will bring people together into teams. Each team can consist of no more than four students. You must tell me the team and which kind of student group you will be thinking about creating by Day Ten.

b. Discover how similar groups are formed at other universities—get hold of things like charters, constitutions, rules of procedure, etc. Remember—we are a small university so we cannot necessarily operate as such groups do in larger, public universities (this can be a disadvantage, but also an advantage!).

c. Consider the different theories of justice we have read and/or discussed—e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Rawls, Saramago, Jackson, market capitalism—and decide which one suits your purposes best. (Yes, you may combine ideas from more than one—but you will need to be clear what these different elements are and how you combine them).

d. Develop a mission statement that incorporates this chosen ideal of justice.

e. Develop rules of procedure for this group. Explain how the group is to operate, how resources will be distributed among group members, how disagreements will be resolved, how meetings will be organized and run, how leadership or executive teams will be chosen, how younger students will be included into the organization in future years, etc.

f. State whether or not these rules of procedure are democratic and why you have chosen them. If they are not democratic explain why democracy is not appropriate to the governing body of this group.

g. Explain how you will raise the money necessary to operate this group. From where will the funds come?

h. Develop a budget explaining how you will use the money you raise. What will be the most important spending priorities you will have? In the first year(s)? In the future?

i. How will students learn in your organization? That is, what educational contribution will your student organization play in helping students become citizens within the university, Squamish, BC, Canada, or the world?

j. Which steps will you take to make this organization a reality?

k. On Day 17 each group will present an outline of its business plan to the class. We will allot twenty minutes per group, and groups need to be prepared to justify the plan on the principles of democracy and justice they have chosen to employ in developing that plan. Please see policy on video projectors. For Day 18, as a group, you will submit an eight to ten page philosophical business plan for the creation and sustenance of this student organization. Such a plan must reflect both the
philosophical ideas you have learned about democracy and justice in this course combined with practical ideas for getting such an organization up and running. In this plan, you must also justify the contributions the group will make to the Quest community and why you believe its practices will foster good citizenship within the university. Use the suggestions and criticisms you receive from the class on Day 17 to revise and refine your written philosophical business plan. **Very important:** The written report must flow as seamlessly as possible. This means that the group has to work together to create a well-organized, coherent paper—not simply four or five separate sections based on each individual’s contribution. This written report will be due on the last day of class. It can be structured as an **expository** essay.

I. Everyone in the group will receive the same grade.

5) **Service-Learning Option culminating in a Philosophical Business Plan.** Based upon ideas and planning by Luce Mélançon, an educational consultant at Quest, I am piloting a different assignment that I’d like you to think about. Instead of creating a student organization at Quest, I would permit a small group of interested students to work at a local community service organization for part of the block and organize a group project around that experience. It builds off of assignment #4 above, but asks you to figure out ways in which the university and Quest students can connect with the organization in question. Luce has put me in touch with **Squamish ReBuild** as the community organization with which we can work. I have invited its Director, Inis LeBlanc, to talk to us about the project, and we can formulate a plan with her. **Accepting this option means donating a number of hours of your time to the organization during the block as a volunteer.** It also means working with Inis to develop a (philosophical) business plan to connect systematically Quest students with the organization itself. Students choosing this option will complete their assignment in lieu of Assignment #4 above, and depending on the number of hours put in as a volunteer, Assignment #3 as well (this is to be negotiated though). If you are interested in pursuing this option you will need to talk with me at the very beginning of the block and commit yourself to the community service time throughout the block (though I would expect greater levels of commitment after, say, Day 10 of the block). I will open this option up to four students in the class—first come, first-served (or if there is a great deal of demand, then some sort of lottery system will be employed).