

PSCI 3600
Democracy & Disagreement
Ian MacMullen, Fall 2024
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1.45 – 3.15pm

When and how can we justify using the power of the government to force our fellow citizens to follow rules with which they disagree? In attempting to answer this question, we will pay special attention to (1) the various different types and sources of political disagreement and (2) the role of deliberation and reason-giving in a democracy. Through reading and debating works of contemporary political theory and philosophy, this course should help you to reflect on some fundamental but easily neglected questions about your own civic attitudes and behavior. What beliefs underpin your political commitments, why do you hold those beliefs, and why do other people see things differently? What makes you so sure that you're right and they're wrong? How, if at all, should you try to change their minds? When, if ever, should you refrain from supporting legal prohibition of actions that you feel sure are morally wrong?

The course will be taught in a hybrid lecture/discussion format. Students will be expected to take a short quiz at the start of many class sessions and to write at least three short papers.