

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Posc 105

DEMOCRACY

- I. THIS MORNING:
 - A. A case for government
 - B. Democracy.
 - C. Political capacity

- II. WHY GOVERNMENT MAY BE NECESSARY:
 - A. A “night-watchman” state
 - 1. Protects rights against attack from others.
 - B. There is possibly another defense of government
 - C. Problem: individual rights and freedom may conflict with the common good.
 - 1. Even worse, **rational behavior** for individuals may lead to collective harm.
 - a. Individuals acting rationally in their own interests can and frequently do bring ruin on the community and hence on themselves.
 - D. The problem of public goods:
 - 1. What would happen if Congress passed a law making support for the military voluntary, much as contributions to charities are voluntary?
 - E. The problem of the **market place**
 - 1. Free riders and freedom
 - 2. Should the government leave environmental protection market place?
 - F. Major proposition: To escape the (inevitable?) problem of the destruction of the commons and free riders some form of coercion is necessary.
 - 1. This is a possible justification for government
 - G. Problems that only individuals organized into social groups can solve.
 - 1. Major argument: many 21st century problems can only be solved by collective action
 - 2. Major proposition: the list of such problems is greater than conventional political wisdom suggests.

- III. ANOTHER ARGUMENT:
 - A. Although we will discuss the following idea in more detail in the section on political culture, let me make the point now that “monopoly-global capitalism” require a (large) capitalist state or government.

IV. DEMOCRACY:

- A. Democracy as an answer to what kind of government?
- B. Democracy as political freedom
 - 1. Individual rights and liberties. We'll list some in class.
 - 2. A negative conception of political rights.
 - a. Rights usually involve freedom from government interference rather than a right to have (or an entitlement to) something.
- C. Democracy as economic freedom
 - 1. Positive versus negative rights: a right to have something
 - 2. Questions:
 - a. Does someone living in poverty have the same effective rights as a wealthy person?
 - b. How valuable are political rights to those who are malnourished, ill?
 - c. Consider two countries, both having identical constitutions guaranteeing political rights and freedom. In one 20 percent of the population lives in poverty; in the other no one does. Are they equally democratic, in the sense of democracy as freedom?
 - 3. Proposition: economic freedom must be part of a definition of democracy.
 - a. Here is where ***There Are No Children Here*** becomes relevant.
 - (1) Do the people in the community Kotlowitz describes have meaningful equal standing in politics.
- D. Democracy and enlightened understanding
 - 1. Robert Dahl: "Each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating...the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizen's interests."¹
 - 2. Proposition: democracy must include enlightened understanding.
 - a. See the point above about ***There Are No Children Here***.
 - b. How enlightened are people in the projects about their interests?
- E. ✱General proposition: rights are a necessary condition of democracy but by themselves do not constitute it.

V. DEMOCRACY AS GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE:

- A. What is the source of a government's **legitimacy**; that is, it's right to command obedience from it's citizen's
 - 1. Popular sovereignty versus divine right of kings: read and listen to "Popular Sovereignty" on the web site.
- B. Proposition: an essential element of democracy is citizen participation in the making of public (authoritative) policies.
 - 1. The word means government **by** the people

¹Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) p. 112.

- C. Popular democracy: citizens make binding decisions.
- VI. OBSTACLES TO AND POSSIBLE REFORMS OF POPULAR DEMOCRACY:
 - A. “Logistical” problems
 - B. Is government of and by the masses desirable?
 - 1. ✱**Democracy is a contested concept.**
- VII. NEXT TIME:
 - A. More on democracy
 - 1. Representation and accountability.
 - B. Political capacity
 - C. Reading:
 - 1. Class web site: “A Case for Government” and “Popular Sovereignty”

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