

Popular Sovereignty

Graduate Seminar

Course Description: The main aim of this graduate seminar will be to examine one of the founding principles of political modernity: the idea that people are the source of sovereign power. We will trace the formation of and the contestations over this idea over a period of two centuries, from the French Revolution to anticolonial movements. Bringing together both historical and theoretical reflections on popular sovereignty, the course will explore the intellectual history of popular sovereignty as well as its messy historical enactments.

In so doing, the seminar will address a number of pivotal questions: Is modern constitutional democracy's claim to represent the will of the people theoretically coherent? Is there an inherent tension between the institutional and extra-institutional dimensions of popular sovereignty? How exactly should we conceptualize popular sovereignty to render it compatible with human rights? What is different, if any, about the colonial career of popular sovereignty? Can we ultimately separate popular sovereignty from populism? Moving away from a commonplace Eurocentric approach to the history of popular sovereignty, this course will integrate resources from European as well as non-European political thought in order to examine popular sovereignty in its global dimension.

Course Requirements:

You will be required to write a seminar paper (15-20 pages) on a topic of your choice. I encourage you to consult me beforehand about the suitability of your topic for the seminar. You will also be expected to take responsibility for initiating at least one discussion, by making a brief (10-15 minute) presentation and introducing a set of questions to guide discussion.

Grade Distribution:

Seminar Paper 70%

Class Presentation 10%

Class Participation 20%

Schedule:

Week 1: Origins of Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Political Thought

1. Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-126.
2. Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1-120.
3. Daniel Lee, *Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1-24, 187-224.

Week 2: Hobbes and the Figure of the Sovereign

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 16-24, chapters 29-30.
2. Hanna Pitkin, "The Problem of Thomas Hobbes" in *The Concept of Representation* (California: University of California Press, 1967), 14-37.
3. Quentin Skinner, "Hobbes and the Purely Artificial Person of the State," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 1-29.
4. Michel Foucault *Society Must Be Defended* (NY: Picador, 1997), 43-114 [we will focus on the section on Hobbes and the origin of popular sovereignty in early modern "race-war"]

Week 3: The *Will* of the People in the Eighteenth-Century

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I-III.
2. Patrick, Riley, "The General Will Before Rousseau," *Political Theory* 6, no. 4 (1978): 485-516.
3. Tracy B. Strong, "General Will in Rousseau and After Rousseau" in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept* ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 307-332.
4. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 49-105.

Week 4: Popular Sovereignty as Constituent Power: The People of the French Revolution

1. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?* in *Political Writings* ed. Michael Sonenscher (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 94-144.
2. Maximilien Robespierre, "The Principle of Revolutionary Government" in *Virtue and Terror* (London: Verso, 2007), 98-107.
3. Marquis de Condorcet, "On the Meaning of the Words 'Freedom', 'Free', 'A Free Man', 'A Free people'" in *Political Writings* ed. Steven Lukes and Nadia Urbinati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 181-189.
4. Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy" in *Democracy and Political Theory* (London: Polity, 1988), 9-21.

5. Pierre Rosanvallon, "Revolutionary Democracy" in *Democracy Past and Future* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 79-97.

Week 5: The People and Its Critics: French Revolution (Continued)

1. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in *Revolutionary Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) [the selected excerpt will be around 60 pages]
2. Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke" in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5-64.
3. Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-61.
4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-30, 127-186.
5. Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) (selections).

Week 6: Popular Sovereignty and the American Revolution: Declaration

1. Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2014), 27-46, 115-128, 257-274.
2. Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" (full).
3. Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Post-Revolutionary America* (NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1-40, 209-236.
4. Melvin Rogers, "The People, Rhetoric, and Affect: On the Political Force of Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 1 (2012): 188-203.

Week 7: Popular Sovereignty and the American Revolution: Constitution

1. The Federalist Papers (Selections)
2. Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989) (Selections)
3. Sheldon S. Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," in *The Presence of the Past*, 82-99.
4. Bruce Ackerman, *We the People volume 1: Foundations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3-58, 131-199.

Week 8: The Color of the Universal: Haitian Revolution, Slavery and Popular Sovereignty:

1. *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* ed. David Geggus (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014), 168-182 (The Haitian Declaration of Independence and other documents).

2. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Overture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) (Selections).
3. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-22, 98-169.

Week 9: The Colonial Career of Popular Sovereignty

1. Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Indian National Congress* (Lahore, 1887), 3-28.
2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958 [1936]) (selections)
3. Kwame Nkrumah, *Toward Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle Against World Imperialism* (Ghana: Guinea Press, 1945).
4. *Selected Documents of the Bandung Conference* (NY: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1955).

Week 10: Anticolonial Popular Sovereignty and Its Dilemmas

1. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (NY: Grove Press, 2004) (selections).
2. Adom Getachew, "From Principle to Right: The Anticolonial Reinvention of Self-Determination" in *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 71-106.
3. Karuna Mantena, "Anticolonialism and Popular Sovereignty" in *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* ed. Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 297-319.

Week 11: The People: Social and Political

1. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 49-106.
2. Sheldon Wolin, "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy" in *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays* ed. Nicholas Xenos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
3. Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Arche, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (2006): 1-14.
4. Jacques Ranciere, "Ten Theses on Politics" in *Dissensus* (NY: Continuum, 2010)

Week 12: Popular Sovereignty: Institutional and Extra-Institutional

1. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Democracy* (1861) (Selections).
2. Duncan Kelly, "Popular Sovereignty as State Theory in the Nineteenth Century," in *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*, ed. Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 270-296.

3. Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 17-59.
4. Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory* (NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 125-135, 268-279.

Week 13: Human Rights, Global Justice, and Popular Sovereignty

1. Jürgen Habermas, "Human Rights and Popular Sovereignty: The Liberal and Republican Versions" *Ratio Juris* 7 no. 1 (1994): 1-13.
2. Seyla Benhabib, *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Turbulent Times* (London: Polity, 2013), 57-93, 117-137.
3. Jamie Mayerfeld, "The Democratic Legitimacy of International Human Rights Law," *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 19, no. 1 (2009): 49-88.
4. Antony Anghie, "Whose Utopia? Human Rights, Development, and the Third World," *Qui Parle* 22, 1 (2013): 63-80

Week 14: Popular Sovereignty and Populism

1. Ernesto Laclau, *On the Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005) (Selections).
2. Barnard Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," *Political Theory* 29 no. 4 (2001): 517-536.
3. Partha Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Sovereignty in Most of the World* (Columbia: Columbia University Press), 27-80.
4. Aziz Rana, "The Populist Challenge and the Unraveling of Settler Society" in *Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 176-235.