

OLIGARCHY: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF WEALTH

IESP-UERJ

August 2024

Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:00-10:00pm

Classroom: Sala Olavo Brasil

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The New School for Social Research

Description

This seminar examines the political theories of oligarchy from Greek antiquity to Western modernity and the age of capitalist globalization. We will treat oligarchy as a central yet evolving political concept through which we can explore and interrogate the relationship between wealth and power, private property and sovereignty, state and class divisions, legal rights and economic inequality, capitalism and democracy, in an attempt to elucidate and reconstruct the broader paradigm of politics that became associated with the political rule of wealth. We will also investigate the material, moral, and symbolic foundations of oligarchic power, its source of legitimacy, claims to rulership, conceptions of justice, its hierarchies, entitlements, and exclusions. Respectively, we will critically investigate how oligarchy, which in the long tradition of political thought, has been defined in tension with democracy, has in the last two centuries gradually fused with it giving birth to new political forms such as the representative governments of liberal oligarchies.

Schedule

Tuesday, August 13

Plato, *The Republic*, Book VIII: 6-10, pp. 261-285.

The Old-Oligarch or Pseudo-Xenophon, *The Constitution of the Athenians*.

Thursday, August 15

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III: 5, 7, pp. 205-219, 231-241.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV: 1-3, pp. 277-299.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV: 5-7, pp. 305-325.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV: 9-10, pp. 329-345.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V: 1-3, pp. 371-397.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V: 5, pp. 401-411.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VI: 4, pp. 513-519.

Tuesday, August 20

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Part 4, Book 20-21, pp. 337-397.

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1752), Part II, chapter I (“Of Commerce”), pp. 253-267.

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, Part II, chapter II (“Of Refinement in the Arts”), pp. 268-280.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Luxury, Commerce, and the Arts” (1754), *Commerce, Culture, & Liberty*, pp. 393-402.

William Robertson, “A View of the Progress of Society in Europe” (1766), *Commerce, Culture, & Liberty*, pp. 503-517.

Wednesday, August 21

James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 10.

Alexander Hamilton or James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 57.

Melancton Smith, “New York Ratifying Convention” (June 20-21, 1788).

James Madison, “Observations on Jefferson’s Draft of a Constitution for Virginia” (October 15, 1788).

Benjamin Franklin, “Queries and Remarks respecting Alterations in the Constitution of Pennsylvania” (1789).

James Madison, “Property” (March 29, 1792).

James Madison, “Note to His Speech on the Right of Suffrage” (1821).

James Madison, “Note on Suffrage” (1829).

Tuesday, August 27

Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy*, chapters 1, 5, pp. 1-39, 208-253.

Jeffrey A. Winters, “Wealth Defense and the Complicity of Liberal Democracy,” *Wealth, Nomos* LVIII, pp. 158-225.