



PAUL OSTROVERHY

Paul OstroVerhy

Summer Holiday Academic Internship Report 2022

PPE

PAUL OSTROVERHY'S TUTORED INTERNSHIP IN PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

A. Goals

This internship has three primary goals:

1. To work on Paul's essay writing, including the ability to structure argument and deal with potential objections.
2. To use the tools of PPE on a single structured study topic: democracy. We will examine the theoretical foundations of democracy, assess philosophical arguments for and against, and use tools from economics to and political science to understand the instrumental benefits or otherwise of democracy.
3. To more broadly discuss PPE as a subject, Oxford life, admissions etc. Some topics for discussion are included below.

B. This tutoring will culminate in a final essay written by Paul, answering the following question:

'Is democracy a good thing even when it produces bad outcomes?'

C. Thinking Skills Assessment

There is an admission test that students sit for PPE, the Thinking Skills Assessment. Whilst we have agreed to avoid looking at this intimidating paper due to Paul's young age, we may use some essay questions or more straightforward questions from the critical thinking part to practice analytical skills and essay structure.

D. Lesson plans

I propose the following structured plan to make best use of our four-hour sessions together.

Supposing we start at 9am:

9 until 9:20:

introduce an interesting warm up question, from the worlds of current affairs, philosophy, classics, literature or anything which sparkles.

9:20 until 11:

move into detailed tutoring on one of our important topics.

11 until 11:15:

short ping pong break to maintain focus and write up any notes

11:15 until 12:00:

Continue detailed discussion of our topic for the day.

12 until 1:

Essay and argument work. I will give Paul an essay question to consider based on the day's work, and expose him to rigorous debate about his ideas before he begins to build a plan. Depending on the day, Paul could be left to continue this plan before we discuss it together the next day.

E. Potential lesson contents**Warm-up questions could include:**

'Is history written by the victors?'

'Do animals think?'

'Is it possible to imagine being a bat?'

'Is truth beauty?'

'It is as though mankind had divided itself between those who believe in human omnipotence (who think that everything is possible if one knows how to organise masses for it) and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives'.

This was written by Hannah Arendt 71 years ago. Is it true? Still? What are the consequences?

'Courage is knowing what not to fear' Discuss.

'Do you prefer France or Britain's political system?'

More substantive questions, to practice essay structure and teach PPE concepts, could include:

'What makes a country a democracy?'

'How can we best explain Euroscepticism?'

'What is populism?'

Concepts to be covered (a basic list of things I'd like to discuss with Paul):**Philosophical:**

Ethical systems, including utilitarianism; necessary and contingent properties, Plato's objections to democracy; Arrow's impossibility theorem, intrinsic vs instrumental Justifications

Political:

Democratic definitions, RCTs, constitutional systems, populism, the natural resource trap, nationalism and political identity.

Economics:

The lemons problem (perhaps in schools?), pollution and climate economics, how useful is economics? possibly Bayes theorem.

PART I

LOG OF THE LESSONS



28/08/2022 - 05/09/2022

Log of the Lessons

Lesson 1 - 28/08/2022

Tutor Log:

Summary: our first session together began with a brief discussion of Paul's current interests and studies. We agreed the outline of these sessions, then warmed up by discussing how to define democracy. Several useful concepts from social science and political theory were introduced. We then spent the bulk of our time on how a democracy can be arranged, covering the British, French and American systems. We combined debate and discussion with direct teaching. The final 45 minutes were dedicated to writing an essay plan operationalising everything we had learned. Paul was excellent, testing his ability on some very difficult concepts. More detail in Lesson notes!

Pupil Log

Looked at some terms for democracy and about the problem of whether it is necessarily good to include the outcomes of a system within the definition of a system. With this in mind, we looked at how human rights cannot really be included in the definition of Democracy. Wrote an introduction to 'Presidential democracies are defensible' and essay planning.

Lesson 2 - 29/08/2022

Tutor Log:

Summary: Today we warmed up with a discussion on nuclear weapons, before doing a lot of work on utilitarianism where we used Paul's pre-reading of a summary of John Stuart Mill's book utilitarianism. We took on the roles of a utilitarian and a critic for a debate, which was an energetic highlight of the session, before writing a very structured essay outline on utilitarianism.

Pupil Log

We opened the session with a talk about nuclear weapons and mutual assured destruction, and how countries would react in such and such circumstances, as well as question about the ethical side of their possible decisions. We played the split or steal game.

Lesson 3 - 30/08/2022

Tutor Log:

Summary: we warmed up today with a discussion of Plato's idea of courage, before talking about his critique of democracy. Then we got into the bulk of our session. I had warned Paul that today would be the toughest of our time together. We discussed some social science basics, particularly what you can infer from correlations, causation, mistakes to avoid, mechanisms of action, and how to ask a political science question. As a practice, we worked together to test a hypothesis on minority religious rights that Paul devised, which was a great part. Finally, I introduced instrumental vs intrinsic benefits, which Paul understood unexpectedly fast. They will become useful soon! A difficult, productive and very worthwhile session.

Pupil Log

The social science was rather hard but we managed to get through everything although it was rather tough. We looked at the ship metaphor and Plato, whilst also looking at some fundamental social science theories whilst getting the intrinsic and instrumental.

Lesson 3 - 31/08/2022

Tutor Log:

Summary: We warmed up by discussing the separation of church and state, before revising some of our liberalism discussion. The bulk of the session was then devoted to two major arguments against democracy: those associated with Thomas Hobbes and Plato, as well as some responses to those arguments, including from Aristotle. Paul and I began developing a document summarising our most useful work on democracy that he could use. We wrapped up a little early for Paul's doctor's appointment. Full notes in Lessons doc. Good session!

Pupil Log

We talked about the relevance of the Church in its relation to the state today and the numerous positive and negative aspects of the separation of Church and State whilst Edward introduced some key concepts of secularism and also about the possible religious tensions that can arise from so and so. We watched Thomas Hobbes which was very interesting.

Lesson 4 - 1/09/2022

Tutor Log:

Today was a lighter session: shorter, easier, and with more breaks. Paul, Sergio and I agreed this would be wise for Paul's wellbeing. We discussed monarchy (constitutional and absolute), populism and the British democracy and constitution. We had a debate on the merits of British monarchy, where Paul showed admirable argumentative verve. Good session!

Pupil Log

I was rather a little tired, burnt out perhaps would be the word and so had a lot of tea and bonbon but it was fine we finally had a topic starter from me which was about the monarchy and what role they have to play today and whether they still hold so much relevance in today's society with a little debate where we assumed different opinions which was fun. We looked at the British constitution and how the Prime Minister powers are limited by the Parliament and so forth, looking at the phrase: 'Parliament alone is Sovereign'.

Lesson 5 - 2/09/2022

Tutor Log:

A session that began with an interesting discussion of Edmund Burke and his views on revolution, then moved into some teaching and discussion on the causes of populism. We then spent two hours considering and assessing a classic and powerful argument in favour of democracy: Robert Dahl's equality argument. We wrote an essay section laying out and assessing his argument. Great session.

Pupil Log

I introduced the lesson with a topic I had put forward which was Edmund Burke. We looked on his key beliefs and how he never properly proposed any formulaic, concrete political philosophy which is one of the main reasons why so many people from different political spectrums claim him to be one of them. That was really interesting and we had a look at populism and causes of populism, assessing which causes had the most importance and rating their 'internal validity' and 'external validity' some new terms I have learnt. Finished it off after numerous table tennis matches on Dahl's argument for Democracy. All going well.

Lesson 6 - 3/09/2022

Tutor Log:

Today was an essay focussed session. We began by discussing a starter question: 'is history written by the victors?' This ranged out into a broadened discussion of free speech, social media, and the effects the invention of the printing press had in the 15th century. We then began writing an essay section on some philosophical arguments about democracy. This was a great section, and I'm very happy with the results (which can be found in 'democracy essay crib sheet'). Finally, we wrote out a plan for Paul's final essay. Excellent session, even better when considering it was shortened by one hour.

Pupil Log

We had good opening on whether history is written by the victors and that went off into the media and what constitutes as censorship and whether it can be justified. Went on about democracy, and that Dahl chap who seems to have some good stuff, although I got completely carried away writing the counter argument and we had some very intense ping pong matches that spun off in now a 8-6 lead to Edward in terms of matches, talking about Cornwall, the Celtic identity of the Welsh and wrote some good stuff for the final essay.

Lesson 7 - 4/09/2022

Tutor Log:

We had two sessions today, a three hour morning session and an evening session that ended up around two hours. Our main task was writing our final essay, where we made superb progress. We also found time to discuss five fascinating problems and paradoxes in philosophy, all of which can be found in the log. Good session!



PART II

CONTENT OF THE MASTERCLASSES



28/08/2022 - 05/09/2022

PREP WORKS

PPE

Lesson 1, Sunday 28th of August 2022

Summary:

Our first session together began with a brief discussion of Paul's current interests and studies. We agreed the outline of these sessions, then warmed up by discussing how to define democracy. Several useful concepts from social science and political theory were introduced. We then spent the bulk of our time on how a democracy can be arranged, covering the British, French and American systems. We combined debate and discussion with direct teaching. The final 45 minutes were dedicated to writing an essay plan operationalising everything we had learned. Paul was excellent, testing his ability on some very difficult concepts.

Began with contingent, necessary and sufficient conditions to facilitate discussion on what democracy is.

For a democratic definition:

Necessary conditions: conditions that must be met for a country to be a democracy

Sufficient conditions: conditions that, when all met, mean the country can be called a democracy

Contingent conditions: conditions that need not be met for a country to be a democracy.

Laid out several possible definitions of democracy, discussing the importance of freedom of expression, votes, and pluralism. Eventually we suggested that:

The following are individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for democracy:

1. Votes for a broad electorate
2. Freedom of expression

Defined social pluralism and political pluralism, and considered the importance of each.

Social pluralism:

the ability to live as individuals please in society, and the presence of different ways of living.

Political pluralism:

the freedom to think as you want, and the presence of multiple political ideas

Discussed problems with including human rights in definition of democracy, specifically how doing so would make it impossible to ask whether democracy causes human rights. This topic is in the area of political science that concerns trials and experiments. I would like to go further with Paul here,

because it is probably the most foundational part of social science, especially the causation correlation distinction.

We now introduced our final essay question, which we will hopefully be able to answer by the end of the week

“Is Democracy a good idea even when it produces bad outcomes?”

We now began to discuss different ways of arranging a democracy; that is we discussed comparative democratic politics.

Constitutional parts definitions:

Legislature: the elected representatives of the people collected together
Executive: a small group or individual who wields political power
Judiciary: the law courts

Discussed some problems of majority rule and laid out need for constitutional arrangements to balance that as well as differing demands on executive and legislature. The following story will be returned to:

Three animals, two wolves and a sheep, are wandering in the desert. They decide to vote on what to have for dinner. The sheep loses faith in democracy fast.

Constitutional arrangements notes:

Parliamentary-Westminster Model:

Legislature is directly elected.
Executive – the leader – depends in legislature confidence.

Merits: flexible, good track record of political survival
Issues: Slow, clumsy decision making

Presidential USA:

Separately elected legislature and executive. The Government does not depend on the Legislature.

Merits: decisive, clear delineation of power,
Issues: may be more prone to democratic collapse, gridlock

Semi-Presidential: French Case:

Hardest to define.
One attempt to describe every semi-presidential democracy needed 26 categories.

Legislature directly elected.
Executive directly elected.
The Government does depend on the Legislature, needs its support to form a Government.

Merits: may be less prone to autocracy
Issues: gridlock is possible

Tutor's comment:

Essay: 'Is Presidential democracy defensible?'. We wrote this essay plan together. Paul's general structuring and writing are excellent. He should be careful to avoid relying on generic essay structures, and ensure everything is directed towards answering the question clearly. It is an excellent essay plan overall. Paul's readiness to discuss objections to his view is very encouraging.

Student's writing:

A Presidential democracy is a democracy where the Legislature and Executive are separately elected, and the Government does not depend on the confidence of the Legislature. Presidential democracy is not defensible because of two inherent flaws in its system. Any defence of Presidentialism is implausible because of these two flaws. The two flaws pointed out are the bad performance of Presidential democracies and its potential democratic fragility. After considering several objections to the flaws I suggest, I conclude that Presidential democracy cannot be sensibly defended.

Defence of Presidentialism: It's decisive. Clear delineation of power. It's democratic because the leader is directly elected by the people.

Flaws with Presidentialism: Rigidity. Bad performance: Legislative and Executive clashing. Leads to Gridlock. Higher chances of democratic collapse and autocratic rule. Military intervention to ease conflict. Demagogues can take power and disregard the system. Data that indicates Presidential democracies are more fragile.

Why these flaws mean indefensibility: Decisiveness can go too far. Demagogues can pass laws too quickly. Democratic collapse leads to failure. Gridlock means it is ineffective. Inescapable flaws make Presidentialism indefensible.

Objections to the flaws: Certain limits to the Executive's power. Stability can be found, look at U.S.A. Moreover, the data supporting democratic fragility is flawed because of confounding variables of military legacies.

Why those objections are wrong: Overall, if we look at the broad scope of Presidential democracies they have a tendency to not hold political stability too long despite occasional exceptions.

Conclusion: Summarise the above, reiterate ultimate judgement

Lesson plan for tomorrow:

Tomorrow will be a philosophy-focussed session. We will begin with a philosophical puzzle on nuclear weapons to warm up for 30 minutes, then teach and discuss utilitarianism for 1 hour, based on the pre-reading I have given Paul. We will then transition into how this can be applied to political thinking, especially on democracy, for another half hour. I am delighted that Paul mentioned he had already read some of *On Liberty*. This will root our discussions. Finally, we will write another essay plan. For work before our session, I will ask Paul to fully write part of this essay, before some brief pre-reading and videos for a social science focussed session on Tuesday.

Reading for tomorrow:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/utilitarianism/summary/#:~:text=Mill%20defines%20utilitarianism%20as%20a,and%20the%20absence%20of%20pain.>

Lesson 2, Monday 29th of August 2022

Today we warmed up with a discussion on nuclear weapons, before doing a lot of work on utilitarianism where we used Paul's pre-reading of a summary of John Stuart Mill's book utilitarianism. We took on the roles of a utilitarian and a critic for a debate, which was an energetic highlight of the session, before writing a very structured essay outline on utilitarianism.

We began by discussing nuclear weapons and the theory of M.A.D.

If Paul ever studies economics, he will notice many of the concepts we began using spring up in game theory.

Definitions

Incentive: A reason to do something, or a reward for doing something.

Utilitarianism: a consequential theory that states an act is right if it maximises net happiness (i.e utility).

One classic objection to this utilitarianism is that it promotes too much base, coarse pleasure.

Discussed the higher lower pleasures distinction as a solution, but also the possibility of this being an elitist idea. Mill says someone who has experienced both 'higher' (such as reading Keats) pleasures and 'lower' pleasures (such as drinking) would always choose the higher pleasure, so utilitarians should prioritise higher pleasures: 'better Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'.

We then discussed the trolley problem: should we kill one person to save three?

Utilitarians say yes; deontological ethicists and most virtue ethicists say no.

Deontological: Focusing more on whether it is right to do the thing regardless of the outcome, the outcome is irrelevant, because the focus is on the action's morality.

Consequential: Looking at the outcomes of situations to determine whether the action is good or bad.

Our ping pong break pivoted around the topic of Wales as a separate entity from England, its history, people, and who wants independence.

We then continued assessing utilitarianism, exploring classic arguments and creating some of our own, as well as talking about argumentative techniques.

How to object to an ethical theory: make the theory, based on its rules and ideas, say something bad that most people would oppose. Argue that accepting the theory entails accepting this bad outcome.

How to reply in defence of the ethical theory: either argue that the theory does not actually say the bad thing, or that the bad thing is not so bad after all.

For	Against
<p>Egalitarian-because people with less resources will get more pleasure from being given more resources, utilitarianism will usually support egalitarian outcomes. Also utilitarianism is inherently quite egalitarian, because we care about everyone's utility equally</p>	<p>The utility monster: imagine an individual who could experience massive utility when given any resource. On a utilitarian account, this individual should be given everything the world can produce, leaving everyone else suffering and depleted. Individualistic and unfair and unequal.</p>
<p>Utilitarianism identifies the good with happiness - an intuitive and appealing answer, because every moral person can understand, experience and appreciate it.</p>	<p>The cluelessness objection: How would the Utilitarian know that the action he did today, such as saving the life of a woman, would do good tomorrow if say that woman gave birth to a murderer.</p>
	<p>The experience machine is a machine that simulates a life of immense and perfect pleasure. Seemingly, a utilitarian would want to plug in to the machine because it maximises utility, yet most of us would want real pleasures and real life. So utilitarianism seems to promote a bad outcome.</p>
	<p>Rights Objection: Some parts of utilitarianism are argued to have no room for human rights. The utilitarian would favour the mayor that chooses an innocent person out of the panicked, frenzied crowd from a city that is terrorised by a roaming killer, and calling him the killer kills him to appease the crowd and have less suffering. Yet this seems a breach of their human rights, a basic moral precedent.</p>

To practice debate, Paul took on the role of a utilitarian defending the theory, while I took on the part of a critic. This was an energetic part of the session, and allowed Paul to continue developing some useful critical thinking techniques.

We briefly discussed links between ethics and politics, taking as an example Mill's *On Liberty*. This book provides the following utilitarian argument for liberty:

Liberty allows people to live freely, and therefore choose how they want to live their life. This will lead to a great variety of ways of living being tried out, so the ones that will produce most utility can be identified. Hence, liberty increases utility in the long run.

Finally, we wrote the following essay outline together. This was a more guided essay structure, so Paul could utilise several essay techniques. The structure I asked him to follow is written in red, so Paul could learn a new way to structure an essay based on developing one strong objection over the course of an essay.

‘Give the best argument against utilitarianism. Is this a convincing argument?’

Intro: brief and simple, answer the question.

Lay out the rights objection clearly but briefly. Say why it is dangerous for utilitarianism.

The rights objection essentially states that utilitarianism is incompatible with human rights. It would disregard rights if it serves a great good, such as: killing one person so that the thousands of people watching the football game on TV will be saved from an electricity cut. There is a clear danger that lies in the moral instability of utilitarianism, it would advocate murder if it produces more good than suffering, and therefore outcomes can be very bad. These unacceptable conclusions should be rejected and should cause us to reject utilitarianism.

Give a utilitarian response that survives this objection.

Definite denial of such a flagrant accusation. Utilitarians do not advocate murder nor do they think that it is morally right to follow such actions. Although sacrifice is necessary a lot of the time to achieve a greater good, we must not let that be a justification for barbarism, because the murder of one person would break trust in society and let the level of happiness fall overall. Thus, a utilitarian need not support the murder, so the objection fails.

(Should talk about the football game TV example)

Now change the objection so that the above utilitarian response fails

The objection can be made stronger. If this is the utilitarian response, the utilitarian would support the private killing of the man because it would not break the society and make everybody happier overall. A positive gain to utility.

Now give an improved utilitarian response

Death is such a strong force that if it is ever applied as a means to more net happiness, it should be not for thousands of people, like in this football match, but millions of people.

Change the objection once more, so the utilitarian cannot escape.

The utilitarian preaches that you can break these rights and therefore they admit they are not inviolable rights that would always be protected and upheld. The utilitarian is therefore not really defending rights at all and is not fully denouncing murder. The theory therefore remains unacceptable to basic moral intuition.

Conclude. I have laid out convincing arguments against utilitarianism and how it can be developed to convince that utilitarianism has a real, ethical problem. As such, with these inherent flaws within the moral theory, the argument is convincing.

(Could say how these is making us concerned about utilitarianism and so forth)

Lesson 3, Tuesday 30th of August

Began with a warm up discussion on the quote: ‘courage is knowing what not to fear’, which we used to run over some of Plato’s philosophy: how everything has an idealised version of itself called the Forms, and ‘good’ things are those that best approach their form. We discussed how politics, for Plato, should try to approach his ‘Form of the Good’. This task for Plato is supposedly best done by philosopher kings.

Plato’s Ship Metaphor is a critique of Democracy which asks us to image of a ship sailing in the ocean where there is danger all around it. It states that it is unfathomable to think that the sailors would be voting on where to sail, when to sail, what to sail and everything else instead of the captain, his stewards and senior staff who have the expertise. Plato reasoned that like in a ship, where the Captain and those that know how to lead a ship, so should states not be run by the ‘rabble’ but by people who have the expertise to govern. In his mind, philosophers were the one who should rule because of their knowledge.

We discussed a modern version of Plato’s philosopher kings: technocracy, for example in Italy and Greece. We discussed how these technocrats could be problematic, divorced from politics and reality. But also their advantages in Platonic terms of being well placed to identify ‘correct’ answers.

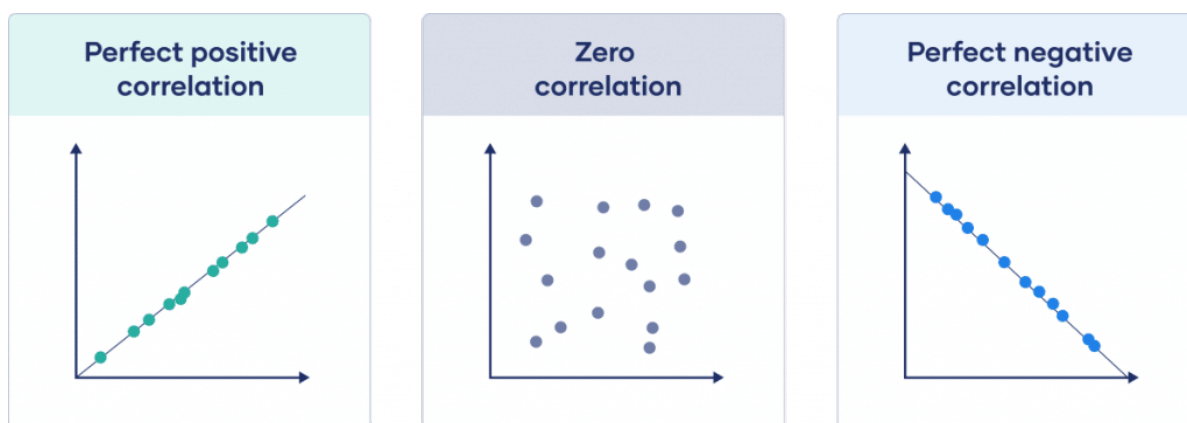
Technocracy: a polity that gives political power to those who know the most about answering contemporary political questions.

We talked about de Gaulle, and how he was summoned by the Government in 1958 to form a new constitution and resolve the Algerian crisis because of the incapability of parliament to decide anything.

Defined selectorate: ‘the people who actually choose who is in power, as opposed to the selectorate who have votes but do not always have political power’.

Social science work

Correlation: Correlation means there is a relationship or pattern between the values of two variables.



 Scribbr

Causation: causation means one variable causes another

We discussed how correlation does not necessarily imply causation in three ways. Suppose someone observes an increase in X and Y. They say increasing X causes an increase in Y. They could be wrong for three reasons:

1. **Coincidence:** The positive correlation in the increase of ice cream sales and murder. There is no causation in having ice cream sales increase and as such have murder rates increase and therefore it is purely coincidental.

2. **Wrong direction of causation:** Instead of y causing x, it is x that causes y. Such as rich countries and long life expectancies being associated. That life expectancies make countries richer would be deducing causation in the wrong direction.

3. **Confounding variable:** There is a positive correlation between sales in ice cream and sales of sunglasses which might be because of an increase in heat. There is no causation because there is a confounding third factor, which is when you have a third variable which causes both of these effects to increase.

To show causation, we need both a correlation and a mechanism: an explanation of how one variable can affect the other.

Discussed proportional representation, and how it can be achieved.

We now discussed applying some of our statistical work to political science questions, especially with relation with relation to democratic peace theory.

Democratic peace theory: the theory that democracies are much less likely to fight each other, or indeed any other country. Evidence shows that democracy is correlated with a reduction in war. But we discussed three ways how this correlation could fail to imply that democracy causes peace, based on the three in red above:

1. The decrease in war fighting could simply be a co-incident (less likely considering the strength of the evidence)
2. Instead of democracy causing peace, peace could cause democracy. Maybe peaceful countries democratise, explaining the correlation in another way.
3. Perhaps a third variable is a confounding variable, causing both peace and democracy. For example, American interference could produce both peace and democracy, but peace and democracy would not be causing each other.

Now moved on to a discussion of intrinsic vs instrumental benefits, as a useful 20 minute break from knotty social science work!

Intrinsic: That a thing is good in itself, in its own right. The sculpture of David is a work of art and beautiful in itself. The absence of suffering is often thought of as intrinsically good.

Instrumental: Instrumental value is value that a thing has because it causes or creates something good. A politician can achieve political goals that will do some good for people's lives, and thus is instrumentally good.

Our final essay question asks whether democracy is whether democracy is a good idea even when it has bad outcomes. So we are assuming democracy has no instrumental benefit, and asking whether it has intrinsic benefit.

Talked about rights clashes during Covid lockdowns.

Also talked on Liechtenstein-Switzerland relation and the numerous military accidents that happened that verged on the brink of war.

Finally, we applied our social science learning to investigate the following hypothesis which Paul devised: 'an increase in state religious power causes a decrease in minority religious rights'.

How do we find out if this hypothesis is true?

First we identify a dataset, the group of countries. Then we give each country a score for state religion and religious minority rights, then look for a correlation between the two scores. If there is a correlation, we need to ask whether there is also causation. This can be done by arguing that there is a mechanism. For example, perhaps we argue state religion puts religious minorities in the position of rebels. We could also discuss a case study, such as religious minority rights falling in India as state interference went up over the last few years.

We found a correlation between the two variables, and suggested several mechanisms for how and why more religious states could reduce religious minority rights.

This was a really fun exercise, and Paul did very well.

We finished up here with some brief reading for tomorrow.

Instrumental: A musical instrument in itself does not hold anything inherently good but it produces art and beauty and therefore perpetrates some good. A politician would serve its purpose of doing some good political decision that helps people, although he could also be good as person itself.

Intrinsic: A person might be intrinsically good in themselves.

Lesson 4, Wednesday 31th of August

Began by discussing the separation between church and state, introduced liberalism discussion and relations, discussed realpolitik explanations for why a state may wish to become secular (reduced tensions) or state religious (increased identity and moral strength).

Also liberal reasons, discussed on liberty and some issues. We went over again liberalism, and considered Mill's 'experiments in living' argument:

1. Liberty allows different people to live very different lives
2. These experiments allow people to discover the best ways to live, setting them be identified over time
3. Liberty is good for everyone in the long run

We discussed some criticisms: how people could use excessive freedom for drug use or other less worthwhile ways to live.

Negative liberty: the absence of constraints on your freedom

Positive liberty: the ability to do things due to your resources and abilities.

Plato's argument against democracy:

1. The goal of politics is to make good political decisions
2. Most people are bad at making political decisions, because they don't know enough about what is good and how to achieve it
3. Experts are much better at political decisions
4. Only experts should make political decisions
5. Democracy is bad

Criticisms:

First of all he assumes that the people are politically incapable of making good decisions, which is bad. He should evaluate, reason and give some concrete evidence why that statement is correct. What is a good decision? It is not as clear in politics to what would constitute as good decisions than in other circumstances such as the ship metaphor. Is it fair to assume that certain people have claims to absolute truths?

- Response: For Plato, yes. Absolute truths are found in the forms, so trained philosophers can claim absolute moral knowledge.

Experts are not necessarily good people who would use their expertise for the benefit of people. Some might be self-interested and seek to use the system for their own advantage

- Response: Maybe experts can be corrupt, but the people are even more prone to corruption by demagogues

We have recently discovered and taken notice of the ‘wisdom of the crowd’ which states that although each person might not necessarily be an expert or know about that specific problem or decision, as a whole and as a collective they can be quite accurate because they balance out each others’ mistakes. (This argument is associated with Aristotle)

- Response: Experts can still utilise the wisdom of the crowd.

Assessment:

I do not find this argument convincing because it is too narrow-minded. There is already an assumption that the purpose of politics is to make good political decisions, which is wrong because it is not the only source of worth in politics and as such the foundations of the argument are flawed. Furthermore, most people might well tend to make bad political decisions, that does not mean that because experts are supposedly better they should have the sole power to make political decisions. Experts could be corrupted and not serve the interest of the people but be self-interested and abuse the system for their personal advantage. Moreover, the collective can make good political decisions. The argument is insufficient to conclude that Democracy is bad.

Criticism of the Philosopher-King:

We have never seen in history before cases of an enduring political system under so-called ‘philosopher-kings’ and they are not grounded in reality. It is too ambiguous, what can we say that a philosopher, who is thinking about ideas, will be suited to deal with on-hand problems. Often they will formulate a theory or a vision of the world and instead of adapting themselves to circumstances they will try and change the circumstances to adapt to their wacky ideas. (Slavoj Zizek)

Thomas Hobbes:

Based upon a short introduction of Hobbes, I can say that it seems that he would caution prudence, moderation and allegiance to political authority regardless of its performance and whether it is good or bad, because the alternative in his mind would be much worse. He tells us to think about the ‘state of nature’ where before the creation of governments there was all-out chaos, anarchy and life that was not very pleasant. He tells us that the creation of Governments was as a response to install order. He does not advocate for revolution and prefers obedience to the Sovereign because it would be much better than that ‘state of nature’ that in his mind was famously called ‘nasty, short and brutish’. Any rebellion against the powerful sovereign risks immense chaos and danger, and so should be avoided at all costs.

Hobbes’ argument against democracy: Hobbes believes that there should be a Sovereign where the power is residing within that figure to ensure that the ‘state of nature’ is suppressed to prevent the brutality of war, chaos and anarchy. As such, most scholars consider Hobbes to oppose democracies, fearing them embodying that character because they would be too indecisive and lacking one strong leadership. Democracies’ heated political debates and chaotic contests go very much against Hobbes’ idea of the Sovereign.

Critique:

The people as a collective whole could become the Sovereign, gaining enormous power by their collectivisation, able to control violence. This view, it should be noted, is rarely found in Hobbes.

We wrapped up a little early so Paul could attend a doctor’s appointment. Good session.

Lesson 5, Thursday 1st of September

Today was a lighter session.

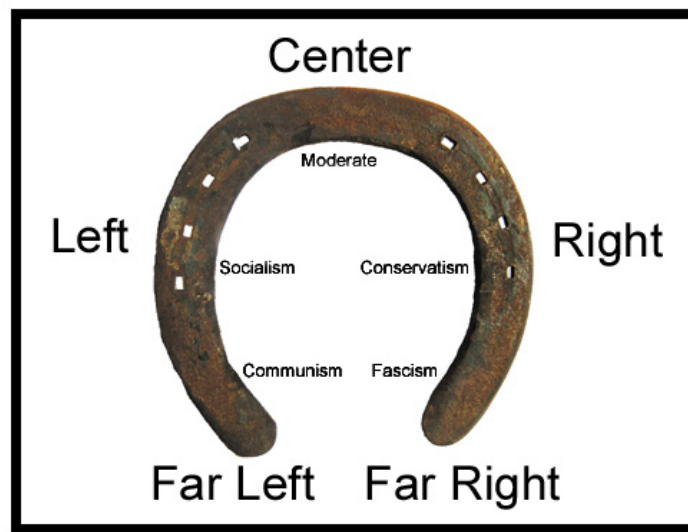
Intro:

Paul came with the question to warm up on: 'is monarchy still relevant?'. We discussed constitutional vs absolute monarchy, historical reasons some contemporary monarchies have survived, the modern power of monarchies. We also compared European monarchies with international monarchies that have retained serious political power, such as Thailand and Saudi Arabia. We then went into a debate where Paul's job was to attack monarchy, mine was to defend. Paul did well here, showing great energy.

Populism:

We looked at populism and what it is by starting to write down a few key figures in the movement – Caesar, Le Pen, Melenchon, Trump, Bolsonaro – We talked about the 'us-them' rhetoric that Populists like to use, and other notable features of populism: identifying truth with the population, and avoiding the adoption of any fixed policy agenda. We considered populism as a style rather than an agenda or ideology. The relationship between democracy and populism will be further discussed!

We discussed the political spectrum: from far left to far right. We identified a problem: hard left and hard right governments often end up looking similar in terms of how they control the economy and regulate culture, religion etc. We discussed one way to understand this: the horseshoe theory of politics:



Also talked about how the Conservatives became ardent Brexiteers to amass all the votes that were going to Farage, as a shift to cover his part of the political spectrum. Also took a little test on Paul's political spectrum. It was not to determine a political orientation but as a learning tool to understand the spectrum.

Finally, we studied Britain's democratic system. The people give power to Parliament through elections. First Past the Post means large parties can win a Parliamentary majority without a majority of votes. Parliament gives some power to the Executive (Prime Minister and Parliament) who use it for urgent questions and day to day management. They also exercise some power over Parliament, but we discussed the slogan that describes where power rests in the British system: 'Parliament alone is sovereign'. Finally, we considered the role of the Supreme Court in keeping Government aligned with the law.

We also briefly discussed the 'dignified', less powerful parts of the UK system: the Queen and the House of Lords.

Lesson 6, Friday 2nd of September

Starter: Edmund Burke, especially his views on revolution.

Causes of populism:

Common form: people form a grievance against mainstream politics, and turn to populism with its traditionalist appeals, radical policy, and easy options for blame

What makes a good explanation in social science:

1. External validity: evidence, ideally quantitative, from a large dataset to prove that the theory resembles reality. The theory must be true or correct.
2. Internal validity: the theory is relevant and explains what we observe in the world.

Economic grievances: globalisation, automation and economic crises since 2008

Internal validity: 9/10 There is a clear cause for Populism in economic crises.

External validity: 7/10 There is data that shows that on a national level Populism rises as economic problems increase. The correlation is positive, and although you have a lack of correlation on the individual level there is a general tendency of an increase in populist sentiment.

Sociocultural grievances: people feel left behind as values and culture change rapidly

Internal validity: 6/10 It is not that clear that people are adhering to Populism because of some sort of value loss, whereas there are clearer, more concise explanations based upon important events such as economic problems and rise in crime and terrorism.

External validity: 5/10 The evidence for this cause is poor.

Status loss: High status, well paid manual workers lose both their social status and economic position due to the above issues, and turn rapidly to populism.

Internal validity: 7/10 You can clearly see that those people who had enjoyed a high status, a good pay and some form of respect and sense of worth and self-dignity have now been forgotten, disadvantaged and there is definitely a growing sentiment of resentment over their loss and a potential strong backlash to blame upon the 'elite'.

External validity: 8/10 Not much evidence, but the evidence we do have is excellent.

The rest of today was spent assessing Robert Dahl's equality based argument for democracy, a liberty-based argument for democracy, then practicing essay writing. Notes from this part of the session may be found in the crib sheet for Paul's democracy essay.

Lesson 7, Saturday 3^d of September

Today was an essay focussed session. We began by discussing a starter question: ‘is history written by the victors?’ This ranged out into a broadened discussion of free speech, social media, and the effects the invention of the printing press had in the 15th century.

We then began writing an essay section on some philosophical arguments about democracy, taking it slow to develop skills. We also wrote out an initial plan for Paul’s final essay. See below:

The benefits of Democracy have been extensively argued by Robert Dahl in his book *‘Democracy and its Critics’*. One of Dahl’s main arguments is that Democracy must follow from the general principle of equality. Dahl relies on the following two premises in his argument for Democracy. Firstly, he states that all citizens know best about what they want in their life and that they are better in defending their interests than anybody else. Secondly, there must be an equality of consideration in which everybody’s interest is weighted equally. Dahl argues that everybody should participate in the collective decision-making because a citizen would be able to represent their interest better than somebody else, and everybody’s interest should be equal.

Dahl’s argument on the equal representation and consideration of people’s interests concludes that Democracy is inherently better than other political systems because it follows naturally from two strong and important general principles: those of equality and the privileged position of individuals to defend their own interests.

Dahl lays out his argument in favour of Democracy with the assumption that all citizens are politically capable of knowing what their interests are and what they want. There is a deep flaw because some of them might be ignorant about political affairs and not know where they want to go in life. Even if they do know what they want, not everybody would be able to know the means by which to achieve that, and if we are to follow Dahl’s reasoning that every person is the best judge of their own interests, then we are to conclude that Dahl prefers the average person not to put some trust in somebody who is more capable of understanding the present situation at hand, or better at devising some sort of plan by which to achieve that person’s interest.

Dahl goes on to state that all interests should be weighted equally and given equal consideration in collective decision-making. If all people’s interest are to be represented equally, it would mean that murderers, violators of the law and even those that want to abolish the current political system should be given as much attention as those that have genuinely good interests not only for themselves but for the collective good. Furthermore, Dahl ignores the possibility of selfish people who would rather abuse the political system for their own personal interest at the expense of others. There are flaws with Dahl’s premises which raises a concern whether his arguments for democracy could convince us.

But Dahl’s premises, and therefore his argument, cannot be rejected out of hand. His main premise of Equality states that all citizens should be given equal consideration of their personal interests. He advocates for a political system which holds every citizen’s opinion and interest equally as important regardless of their background. It has a fundamental appeal to the human ear because it tells about the equality of all people. The religious, philosophical and moral reader is struck by the good virtues that it aims to embody. The wisdom of the crowd would outnumber the possible selfishness of individual minorities.

Furthermore, criticism of Dahl’s second premise that every person is the best judge of their own interests survives the criticism above because we ultimately as humans know best about what we desire most. Nobody is in our own individual privileged position to understand our deepest desires and sense our most urgent needs. We are the ones which would argue with the most fervent conviction for our general well-being; even if another individual were better than political planning than me, they would lack my appetite for my own wellbeing.

The premise of equality continues a deeply human and ancient tradition. Dahl’s argument is convincing because it derives from our fundamental intuition to honour this tradition of equality.

Lesson 8, Sunday 4th of September

Began by discussing four famous paradoxes: the ship of Thebes, the Teletransporter, The runners paradox, and newcomb's paradox.

The ship of Thebes: Suppose you replace one-tenth of the planks that make a ship every year. After ten years, you have replaced every plank. Is this the same ship you have started with? What if you take all the old original planks and reconstruct a ship from them? Is this the same ship? Paul thought it was a new ship entirely.

The teletransporter: A machine evaporates you in Paris, and reconstructs an exact copy of you from different particles in Bali. Is this a teleporter or a killing machine? Paul opposed using the teletransporter.

The runner's paradox: You are to run a 100m race. You run $\frac{1}{2}$ the race, then another $\frac{1}{4}$, then another $\frac{1}{8}$, etc. Clearly, this race can be split into an infinite series of fractions of 100m. But if there is always another fraction of the race to run, how can you ever finish?

Newcomb's paradox: There is a reliable predictor, another player, and two boxes designated A and B. The player is given a choice between taking only box B, or taking both boxes A and B. The player knows the following:^[4]

- Box A is transparent and always contains a visible \$1,000.
- Box B is opaque, and its content has already been set by the predictor:
 - If the predictor has predicted the player will take both boxes A and B, then box B contains nothing.
 - If the predictor has predicted that the player will take only box B, then box B contains \$1,000,000

We might think we should take only box B, to ensure it contains one million dollars. But why not take both—surely a choice now cannot affect past events like the filling of the boxes? But then the predictor would predict that! Which option should you choose? Can choices now affect past events? Paul and I agreed this is the most frustrating paradox of all.

Began discussing instrumental questions about democracy.

Now moved on to discussing Amartya Sen, and his theory that democracy reduces famine by making governments more alert to food shortages, and incentivising them to take action. Free speech and the ability to criticise government can also force action.

Democratic peace theory: democracies are less likely to fight wars than autocracies, especially against other democracies. Major reasons:

- Democratic countries tend to prefer diplomatic means
- Slower to go to war because opposition parties, media etc can oppose war
- Pax Americana: democracies are often aligned with American alliances, making it harder for them to fight each other.

Robinson + Acemoglu: argue democracies do better economically, because they are less prone to corruption and more inclusive of workers.

Possible instrumental disadvantages: perhaps the people are too foolish to be involved (Plato)

Strongman argument: countries need strong, frank clear political leadership, which democracy cannot provide

We spent the rest of the session writing more of our essay, focussing on Plato's critique of democracy.

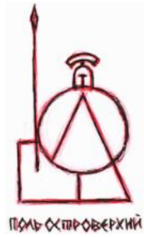
Evening session: more essay writing, and the following paradox:

A teacher announces to her class that there will be a surprise test sometime during the following week. The students begin to speculate about when it might occur, until one of them announces that there is no reason to worry, because a surprise test is impossible. The test cannot be given on Friday, she says, because by the end of the day on Thursday we would know that the test must be given the next day. Nor can the test be given on Thursday, she continues, because, given that we know that the test cannot be given on Friday, by the end of the day on Wednesday we would know that the test must be given the next day. And likewise, for Wednesday, Tuesday, and Monday.



Topic planner for the week

Topic	Introduced?	Fully taught?	Confused? Tick here	Half-understood? Tick here	Fully understood? Tick here
Necessary and sufficient conditions	Yes	Yes			✓
Defining democracy	Yes	Yes			✓
Types of democracy (Presidential etc.)	Yes	Yes			✓
Detailed case study-UK democracy	Yes	Yes			✓
Instrumental vs intrinsic benefits	Yes	Yes			✓
Utilitarianism	Yes	Yes		✓	
Ethical explanations of politics	Yes	Yes			✓
Political science basics	Yes	Yes		✓	✓
Advantages of democracy - economic and practical	Yes	Yes			✓
Philosophical arguments for democracy	Yes	Yes			✓
Objections to democracy	Yes	Yes			✓
Populism	Yes	Yes			✓



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