

## Week I: Supplemental Notes to Lecture I and Chapter I

### I. Representative Democracy and Direct Democracy

On page 12 of Chapter 1, we read that: “A democracy is a government in which political power—influence over institutions, leaders, and policies—rests in the hands of the people. In a representative democracy, however, the citizens do not govern directly. Instead, they elect representatives to make decisions and pass laws on behalf of all the people.

Well, that basic description of the workings of the US Government doubtless sounds familiar to you.

Nevertheless, we ought to ask a fundamental question in this context: namely, should “democracy” entail something more than providing citizens with a form of government that allows them to vote for elective officials every two to four years?

To begin to answer that question, let’s take a closer look at the term, democracy itself, which first appeared twenty-five hundred years ago, in Ancient Greece.



For the Greeks, the word, Democracy, is formed by conjoining the Greek noun, **Demos**, or people, and the verb, **Kratein**, or to rule.

Which gives us, *rule by the people*, or **Demokratia**.

On page 13, our text in fact states that in “ancient Athens, the most famous example of a direct democracy, all male citizens were allowed to attend meetings of the Assembly. Here they debated and voted for or against all proposed laws.”

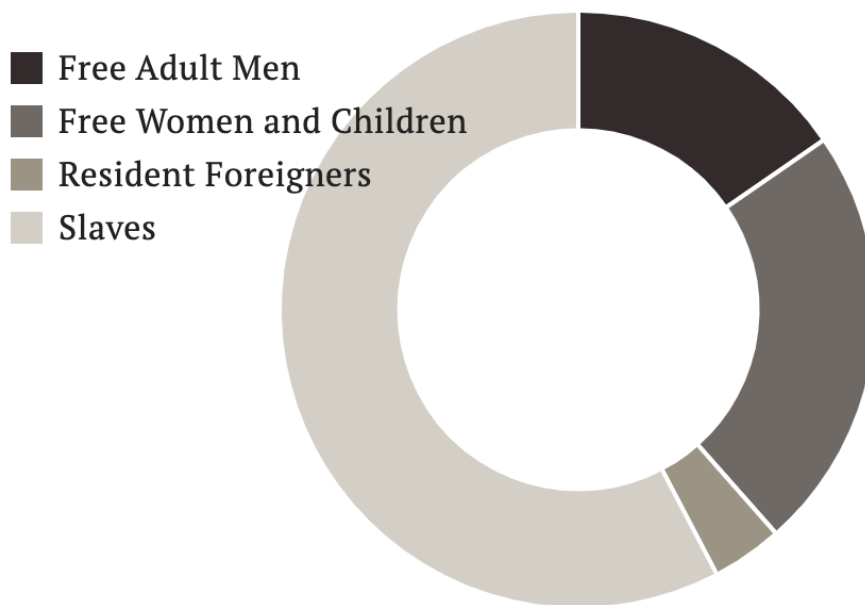
Since our text draws our attention to the Greeks, there are a few important things to bear in mind when referring to **direct democracy**, as it was practiced in Antiquity.

First, the city-state of Athens, the so-called birthplace of Democracy, covered only 700 square miles, about half the size of Rhode Island, and had a total population of about 150,000, which is a bit smaller than Knoxville's.

Moreover, only 15 % of that estimated total population consisted of adult male citizens who could participate in politics.

Excluded from political affairs were women, foreign nationals, and slaves.

## Population Makeup of 4th Century Athens



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The two Ancient Greek political institutions that were integral to the practice of Direct Democracy were the Boule and the Ekklesia.

The **Boule** was a 500-member governing council whose most important task was to draft proposals that would then be submitted to all citizens in the assembly or **Ekklesia**, where they would debate the resolution and then vote on it, in a large amphitheater.

The Boule is thus similar to a congressional committee that drafts resolutions for the entire House or Senate to vote on.

However, that similarity only goes so far, because it was the entire Greek citizenry, rather than a body of elected representatives, who would vote directly on this or that bill in the Ekklesia.

Another key difference between Greek Democracy and our representative democracy lies in the fact that the members of the Boule or governing council were neither elected by the citizens nor appointed by party leaders.

Instead, they were selected through a process called **Sortition**, which functioned like a lottery.

Members of the Boule were thus selected in a manner that is comparable to how, in the US today, respondents to public opinion surveys are chosen, or to how initial jury pools are created.

In Ancient Greece then, every male citizen was eventually chosen *by lot* (or randomly) to serve once or twice on the Governing Council, though never for consecutive years.

This rotation system and random selection process were meant to prevent the kind of corruption that is associated with having entrenched office holders remain in power year after year.

## II. What is Ideology? (“I Have No Ideology. My Ideology is Health.”)

During an interview published last year in [Vanity Fair](#), Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, declared: “I have no ideology. My ideology is health.”

That statement now appears on cups and t-shirts sold on Etsy, suggesting those who purchased such items were not troubled by what seems like a glaring contradiction; after all, how can someone declare that they have no ideology and then in the very next breath state that their “ideology is health”?

Well, Fauci is referring here to the mistaken conception of ideology that we discussed in our first lecture. That is, for Fauci, someone who has an ideology harbors a set of dogmatic beliefs that are unsupported by facts. As a result, such a person has a distorted view of the truth. In that sense, Fauci claims to *not* have an ideology.

Fauci states *his* view of the world, by contrast, is based upon principles that are supported by the science of health. So, Fauci’s assertion that his ideology *is* “health” is meant to be taken as an **ironic statement** (in the sense of saying one thing but meaning another). In other words, when Fauci tells the person interviewing him that “my ideology is health,” we should imagine that he is placing the word, ideology, within quotation marks, indicating that he does not really have an ideology at all.

We have seen then that ideology refers to a worldview that everyone has. It is also mistakenly used by some to refer to a distorted view of the world, which is then criticized for failing to recognize a supposedly non-ideological and true vision of the world. In *Ideology and Utopia*, a highly influential work published in 1929, the German sociologist Karl Mannheim summarizes what we are calling the **mistaken understanding of “ideology”** in the following terms: “the

term [ideology] denotes that we are skeptical of the ideas and representations advanced by our opponent. They are regarded as more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation, the true recognition of which would not be in accord with his interests. These distortions range all the way from conscious lies to half-conscious and unwitting disguises; from calculated attempts to dupe others to self-deception.”

Throughout the semester, we will by contrast think of ideology as something everyone has, as a set of ideas and beliefs that an individual or group holds to be true.

### III. The Concept of Hegemony

In our first lecture, we said that while every ideology is structured around certain concepts and claims that set it apart from other ideologies, on a societal level, different ideologies are also engaged in an ongoing struggle *with* one another, a historical process through which each one vies for dominance—or at least for greater influence. An ideology that achieves dominance in this sense is considered **hegemonic**. Hegemony refers to a power dynamic in which one social group exercises control by gaining the active consent of other social groups.

And how does this active consent to, or acceptance of, the dominant, hegemonic ideology come about? **Not through acts of coercion but through the art of persuasion and the process of socialization.**

As a result, the power of hegemony most clearly manifests itself when diverse social groups **internalize** the moral and cultural values of a dominant group. That is, individuals internalize or *take inside of themselves* external values, and in so doing make those values their own. For example, individuals internalize the belief that certain animals are ours to eat, while others are ours to have as pets. They take that belief inside themselves, they make it their own and then behave accordingly.





## IV. Forms of Civic Engagement

In our first lecture, we saw how the sit-in could be assessed as a form of civic engagement. To take another example, let's consider picketing, a type of political action targeting retailers that is often used in order to publicize an issue, provoke a public outcry, and deter would-be consumers from entering stores.

So, let's say a friend calls, urging you to join them in a local picket of a national grocery chain to pressure it into giving their front-line workers hazard pay amid a pandemic.

Would you consider that a legitimate political activity?



Gloria Rubac on the picket line with Kroger workers.

The answer would depend, first, on whether you think a certain *form* of civic engagement, in this instance, picketing outside a store, is acceptable.

And two, it also depends on whether you think the stated *goal* of this form of participation, attempting to increase worker benefits, is one that members of the general public should try to achieve.

Perhaps you think instead that such an issue is a matter best left to the private contractual relationship that employer and employee have *freely* entered into and agreed upon.

*If* you feel that way, picketing in front of a grocery store would be regarded as an illegitimate intrusion into the internal affairs of a private corporation, even if you think that *picketing in itself*, as a form of political expression, might be appropriate in other circumstances, for example in front of a Planned Parenthood clinic, a particular type of protest that is discussed in some detail on page 16 of our text.

**Quiz Question 5: How were members of the Boule, or governing council, selected in Ancient Greece?**

**Quiz Question 6: Briefly give your own example of how some individuals in the United States have internalized an external belief.**