

Robert Dahl, “Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition” (1971)

- What is **polyarchy**? Why does Dahl use the term instead of ‘democracy’?
- Three “necessary but not sufficient” conditions for democracy. Citizens must be able to:
 - Formulate their preferences
 - Signify their preferences
 - Have their preferences weighed equally
- These three conditions require up to eight guarantees (see Table 1 – why are requirements 6-8 required for to go beyond the mere formulation of preferences?)
- What are some examples Dahl uses to support the claim that “public contestation and inclusiveness vary somewhat independently”?
- See Figures 1 and 2: Liberalization, Inclusiveness, and Democratization
 - Do you agree that “no large system in the world is fully democratized”?
 - On “the large space in the middle”
 - § “reflects...historic tendency to classify regimes in terms of extreme types”
 - § “perhaps the preponderant # of regimes today would fall in the mid-area”

Amartya Sen, Democracy as a Universal Value (1999)

- Why does Sen compare “democracy as a universal value” to the “default” setting in a computer program. What was the old ‘default’ setting? Do you agree that democracy is the new one? (And can you think of any counterexamples?)
- “Many economic technocrats recommend the use of economic incentives (which the market system provides) while ignoring political incentives (which democratic systems could guarantee). This is to opt for a deeply unbalanced set of ground rules.”
- What does Sen mean when he says that democracy has *intrinsic*, *instrumental*, and *constructive* importance?
- Regarding democracy’s *constructive* value:
 - Sen is following in the tradition of **deliberative democracy** here
 - Why is it important to debate the idea of what constitutes a “need” in a given society? (“We do not see immortality as a “need” because it is clearly unfeasible. Our conception of needs relates to our ideas of the preventable nature of some deprivations and to our understanding of what can be done about them.”)
 - Do you agree that “the reach and effectiveness of open dialogue are often underestimated in assessing social and political problems”? What are some examples of this? Some **counterfactuals**?
- Finally, “what is a universal value?...the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable....[especially] whether people might see some value in a claim that they have not yet considered adequately.”
- Counterarguments (how does Sen respond to each?)
 - From regional contrasts in levels of economic development: poverty (“poor people are interested...in bread, not in democracy”)
 - Cultural differences
 - § “Asian values”
 - § Islam