

Power to the People?

Athenian and US Federalist Democracies Compared

Course #	19FPP
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Kim Matland
Date and Time:	Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting September 25
Location:	Smith College Campus Center, Room 204
Maximum number of participants:	17
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: The seminar will look at the Athenian vision of participatory democracy as expressed through the reforms of Cleisthenes and Ephialtes and compare with the Federalist vision of representative democracy as expressed in the original US Constitution.

Description: Athenian democracy had most of its citizens voting on each proposed law, by majority vote, with no potential checking veto from an aristocratic body or governor. We will learn how Athenian citizens were deeply involved in all political and judicial decisions, including subjecting their officials to audit and impeachment.

In contrast, we'll look at how American democracy evolved, drawing on the differing approaches of the colonial states (e.g., Puritan Massachusetts and Quaker Pennsylvania) and their first attempt at federation (the Articles of Confederation). The end result was the US Constitution, under which federal laws are made, not by referendum, but by representatives, generally subject only to audit and accountability at the ballot box. Topics to be covered include the Athenian law-making process, the Athenian court system and proposals to increase citizens' participation in current US law-making.

Role of participants: The moderator will provide a list of suggested topics, from which each participant will choose one on which to make 30-minute presentation and then lead a discussion.

Resources: Required reading: *Democracy: A Life*, Paul Cartledge, Oxford U Press, 2018 paperback. The moderator will also provide participants with a bibliography suggesting one or more starting resources for each suggested presentation topic.

About the Moderator: Kim has been involved in federal, city, and town politics (e.g., aide to Rep. and Mayor Ed Koch) and has practiced law, as well as being a life-long student of history, ancient and modern.