

Republicanism

Republicanism is a theory of government that emphasizes the participation of citizens for the common good of the community. The responsibilities and duties of citizens are paramount, and the exemplary citizen readily subordinates personal to public interests. In contrast to liberalism which is concerned primarily with the personal and private rights of individuals, republicanism stresses the public rights of individuals, republicanism stresses the public rights and obligations of citizens to cooperate in support of their community.

Essential characteristics of republicanism are beliefs or assumptions about the relationships of individuals, the community, and government, including the following ideas:

- The needs of the community are considered superior to the claims of the individual
- Citizens are obligated to participate extensively and cooperatively in public affairs
- The common civic identity is primary over diverse and particular identities
- Political and civic unity are valued more than diversity or pluralism in the community
- Citizens are equal in their duties, responsibilities, and rights
- Participation by citizens is the means to accountability in government and to personal fulfillment
- Popular sovereignty is the foundation of good government
- Good government carries out the general will of the people
- All citizens are capable of self-rule
- All citizens are capable of civic virtue and are obligated to cultivate it
- Good republican government depends upon the continuous civic and political participation of virtuous citizens

Republicanism is rooted in the political and civic ideas of classical antiquity, as they were expressed and practiced in the city-communities of Greece and in the Republic of Rome. These ideas were revived during the Renaissance era in western Europe, particularly in the city-based republics of northern Italy, such as Florence, Genoa, and Venice. Leading French philosophers of the European Enlightenment, such as Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, also put forward republican political ideas.

By contrast, the political philosophy of liberalism, based on the primacy of constitutional government designed to guarantee the inherent and inalienable rights of individuals. The founding era produced a hybrid theory of liberal republicanism that developed into the democratic republic of the United States of America and subsequently influenced the worldwide spread of representative and constitutional democracy.

Proponents of the participatory model of democracy emphasize republicanism more than liberalism, but both systems of political thought have a place in their ideas about good government. Conversely, advocates of the liberal model of democracy recognize the importance of political and civic participation for the common good, but they subordinate it to the personal and private rights of individuals. There is an ongoing debate among promoters of representative and constitutional democracy about the appropriate blend of these two strains of political thought in the institutions of government and the public life of citizens.

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper:

1. Define the following terms: paramount, subordinate, assumptions, popular sovereignty, proponent.
2. Summarize the theory of Republicanism.
3. Contrast Republicanism and Liberalism (the other paper) by using the following spectrum

