***Study and Discussion Questions: Politics, Book III***

1. Chapter 1: Why is it important for Aristotle to settle who or what a citizen is? What is his answer?
   1. Consider a couple of alternative definitions of citizenship:
      1. *The Expansive Aristotelian View* - citizen is someone who participates in the common good of the polis.
      2. *The Democratic Theory View* – a citizen is a free and equal co-holder of society’s sovereign political power

* + 1. *The “Man in the Street” View* – a citizen is someone who is eligible to hold office and to hold office-holders accountable by voting, who enjoys a range of immunities and protections, who is entitled to seek employment, to reside in a state’s territory and to procure a range of social benefits.[[1]](#footnote-1)

How would Aristotle argue against these definitions and for his own?

* 1. Why is holding office an important part of citizenship? What is Aristotle’s argument for this?
     1. Does it follow that tyrannies have just one citizen?
     2. Why does Aristotle say that his characterization of citizenship applies preeminently to democracies?
        1. Does Aristotle believe in democracy? Why or why not?
        2. If we believe in democracy as Aristotle understands it, what is its justification? Why don’t we think instead that there should be virtue- or property-qualifications for citizenship?
  2. The definition of citizenship enables Aristotle to define a polity or city-state. What is his definition?

1. Chapter 2: Aristotle defines citizenship in chapter 1, but he does not say who should enjoy that legal status.
   1. Does he give us an answer in chapter 2?
   2. Contrast Aristotle’s criterion of eligibility for citizenship with those of [Germany](https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/justice_seminar/Aristotle/Citizenship/German%20Law%20on%20Nationality.pdf), [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_nationality_law) and [Rome](https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/justice_seminar/Aristotle/Citizenship/The%20essentials%20of%20Roman%20citizenship.pdf). Why do these states adopt the criteria they do for who should be a citizen?
2. Chapter 3: raises interesting questions about the identity of the polis through time.
   1. Identity condition seems to be sameness of constitution. Can this be right, or would we say that a country remains the same country even if it adopts a new constitution?
   2. Does the musical analogy that Aristotle introduces at 1276b10 serve him well? Perhaps in the case he imagines, we would not say that the two melodies are different, but that one is a variation of the other.
3. Chapter 4:
   1. What does Aristotle mean by saying that the virtue of a good citizen and that of a good man are not unqualifiedly the same? What arguments does he offer for that claim? Do you find them persuasive?
   2. Is Aristotle right to say that citizens cannot all have one virtue? How specifically are we identifying virtues?
   3. Aristotle says that “practical wisdom is not the virtue of those who are ruled, but true opinion is”.

* + 1. How does this fit with his claim that free people are those capable of deliberation? Political rule is, after all, rule over those who are free.
    2. Why does a ruler have to learn how to be ruled? Is it, after all, to perfect their practical wisdom?
  1. Why does Aristotle think that those who rule do not need to know how to produce necessities? Do they at least have to know how the necessities are produced?

1. Chapter 5:
   1. Why does Aristotle think artisans and laborers shouldn’t rule?
   2. Have we established that in good regimes, the virtue of the good man is identical with the virtue of the good ruler, or good citizen? Why should we accept that conclusion?

1. Chapter 6:
   1. what does Aristotle say that a constitution is? Is he referring to a written constitution here?
   2. Near the end of chapter 6, Aristotle says that correct constitutions “look to the common benefit”. When utilitarians speak of the common benefit, they mean average or total utility. Rawls means “the benefit of the representative equal citizen”. What does Aristotle mean? (see 1282b17 “justice is the common benefit” – what does that mean?)
   3. At the end of chapter 6, Aristotle says “a city-state is a community of free people”. Does he just mean that it is a community of people who are not legally or naturally slaves, or does he mean something else? (RECALL: that one of the ways Rawls thinks we are free is that we can form a conception of our good. Is that what Aristotle means? HINT: see the remark about “deliberative choice” at 1280a33)
2. Chapter 7: what are the six kinds of constitution and how do they differ?
3. Chapter 8: how does Aristotle qualify his discussion of the kinds of constitution in the previous chapter?
4. Chapter 9:
   1. Walk through the difficult argument that runs from 1280a15 to 1280a24.
   2. What is Aristotle’s argument for the important conclusion that a city-state exists “only when households and families live well as a community whose end is a complete and self-sufficient life”? (1280b33)
      1. Why does Aristotle equate such a life with living nobly?
      2. Recall that Aristotle began the chapter by talking about equality. How does the equation referred to just now enable Aristotle reach the conclusion that “those who contribute most to this sort of community have a larger share in the city-state”? What does he mean by “larger share in the city-state”?

* + 1. Do we agree with Aristotle about “larger share[s]”? What of the intuition many have that a state would be unjust if it did not provide incentives – specifically economic incentives – for people to be high achievers?

1. Chapter 11
   1. What is Aristotle’s argument early in the chapter for the conclusion that the multitude should have some role in deliberation? Do the musical and gustatory analogies he relies really tell in favor of his conclusion?
   2. Explain Aristotle’s important conclusion about the rule of law at 1282b1.
2. Chapter 17: Under what circumstances would it be rational to defer to one person of superior virtue?

1. On the expansion of the American notion of citizenship, see Judith Shklar’s [*American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*](https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/justice_seminar/Aristotle/Aristotle%20(Protected%20Readings)/Shklar%20(American%20Citizenship,%20The%20Quest%20for%20Inclusion).pdf); on the expansion of the notion of democratic citizenship as a result of liberal reforms in 19th and 20th century England, see either [excerpts from](https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/justice_seminar/Aristotle/Aristotle%20(Protected%20Readings)/Marshall%20(Citizenship%20and%20Social%20Class,%20excerpts).pdf) or [the whole of](https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/justice_seminar/Aristotle/Aristotle%20(Protected%20Readings)/Marshall%20(Citizenship%20and%20Social%20Class,%20complete).pdf) T.H. Marshall’s *Citizenship and Social Class.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)