PHIL 109-21

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR IN PHILOSOPHY: WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

In this seminar we will examine some of the fundamental ideas and questions behind democracy and provide a reading of their "inventors". Some of the questions are: What is democracy? Is it a form of government, a value, an ideal, a political system, a form of life, a bit of all this? Is democracy always the best political solution (is it possible in wartime? in conditions of general starvation?)? Why should the whole of the people decide and not the specialists in the respective questions? Are all democratically taken decisions automatically legitimate (what about minorities' rights?)? How should all citizens in a democracy participate in politics? By direct self-government of the people or by voting for representatives? Is everything democratically decidable or does the individual have unalterable rights? Is tolerance and/or free speech necessary for democracy and how far can it go?

PROFESSOR AXEL MUELLER

M/W 3:30 - 4:50