

## POLS/ECON 409 · *Democratic Responsiveness & Economic Change (1)*

1. What is post-democracy? How does it differ from the pre-democratic and democratic phases of political development? How does it differ from authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states? It will help to explain Crouch's "parabola" of democratic development.
2. What causes or processes led to post-democracy? In your view, does Crouch leave out or minimize any important features, or overstate any?
3. What is pluralism, and why has it declined since the mid-twentieth century? In what ways has the logic of collective action changed according to Crouch?
4. What role does "legal" corruption play in Crouch's argument? How does it intersect with neoclassical ideas about privatization and regulation? What effect did the financial crisis have on post-democracy?
5. What role does globalization play in post-democracy, given the difficulties of scaling democracy up from the nation-state? (*Aside:* has there ever been a period of widespread, healthy democracy and globalized trade and finance?) What does Crouch think we can learn from the European Union about democracy in a globalized world?
6. What role do class, race, and religious identity play in the transformation of democracy to post-democracy? What does Crouch mean by "pessimistic nostalgia"? Is it a product of post-democracy or a cause?
7. In the classic *Paper Stones* (1986), Adam Przeworski and John Sprague found that working class households never constituted a demographic majority anywhere in the history of capitalism, dashing the hopes and defying the expectations of socialists. Reading Crouch and reflecting on recent history, is there any reason to expect or hope for a renewed political role for organized labor? Can democracy ever produce egalitarian outcomes without a robust union movement?
8. As work shifted to the service sector, left-leaning parties found their traditional electorates cut from beneath them and sought to build new, diverse coalitions. To a lesser degree, parties have also grown reliant on consultants and less controlled by activists. Crouch sees these changes as adaptations to post-democracy, rather than evolutions within democracy. Do you agree?

9. Crouch and Farrell argue that as a result of post-democratic transformations, center-left parties have little left to offer electorates fed up with poor economic performance. Why do politicians fail to satisfy constituents? How have voters reacted? Will the pandemic and its aftermath change this dynamic or reinforce it?
10. Can you retell Piketty from a Crouchian perspective? Is there an elite-driven parabola of economic equality embedded in Piketty's argument that bends towards "post-egalitarianism"? To what extent are these separate or separable phenomena? Can they be reversed or resisted?
11. Today's readings blend normative questions – *how should we be governed?* – with empirical and theoretical ones – *how are political institutions responding to mass publics, and is this changing?* Regardless of whether you agree with Crouch or Farrell on the social science, do you accept with their vision of democracy? More broadly, do they assume too much consensus on political ideals? Might democracies fail to meet their standards because large portions of the mass electorate *prefer* them to function differently?
12. Crouch stresses the importance of changes in information technology, especially social media, in creating threats to an informed citizenry capable of sifting through expert opinion to understand 21st century problems like climate change. How have political and economic forces contributed to these problems? Are solutions available, or are there trade-offs or limits to democracy's ability to overcome a "post-truth" environment? Is paralysis and disengagement an inevitable feature of mass publics in facing complex public problems like financial regulation, globalization, and climate change? What evidence does the pandemic provide for Crouch's claims?
13. Is post-democracy stable? Can it remain legitimate as both the memory of effective democracy and effective responses to public needs fade? What, if anything, comes after post-democracy?

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