

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? In Crouch's view, are free and fair elections sufficient for democracy? Is liberalism sufficient?
2. Is paralysis and disengagement an inevitable feature of mass publics in facing complex public problems like financial regulation, globalization, and climate change? To what extent is public confusion and apathy engineered by elites?
3. According to Crouch, why do firms have an advantage in shaping the actions and capacities of post-democratic states? How does privatization entrench this advantage? Are there parallels to Piketty's arguments about the ratchet-effects of capital accumulation?
4. 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 national democracy and globalized trade and finance?)
5. What role does the mass media play in shaping post-democratic politics? What role does elite adaptation to democracy play?
6. Crouch argues that market-driven news provision cannot produce informed citizenries capable of active democratic participation. Why is this? If citizens want to be informed, why aren't these markets self-correcting?
7. What role does the organization of the labor market play in the development of post-democracy? What happens when automation and wage polarization intersect with the trend to postdemocracy?
8. 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?

9. 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?
10. 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?
11. Crouch suggests the pace of post-democratization can only be tempered, not reversed. What do you think of his recommendations? Do any seem prescient or ironic, a decade in retrospect? What critiques might other authors in the course give to Crouch's proposals? Which actors can even take up these proposals in a post-democratic world?
12. Can you retell Piketty or Blyth from a Crouchian perspective? Is there an elite-driven parabola of economic equality embedded in Piketty's argument that bends towards "post-egalitarianism"? Does Crouch's theory help explain the surprising resurgence of austerity policy in the last decade?
13. This week'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?

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