James Madison Legacy Project Online Course: Review and Discussion and Research Questions

UNIT 1

Lesson 2

Section 1, Review Questions

*Instructions: Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.*

1. Aristotle classified forms of political association as good and bad.
2. Both Plato and Aristotle articulated the classical republican philosophy.
3. Classical republicans believed that humans by nature are interdependent political animals.
4. Classical republicans believed that civic virtue and the fulfillment of one’s capacities are best nurtured in small, homogenous communities.
5. Civic virtue includes good habits such as moderation and a devotion to the common good.
6. Both Plato and Aristotle addressed the problem of identifying rulers who would not be corrupted by political power.
7. Aristotle called for rulers to be philosophers or “philosopher kings.”
8. Aristotle believed one way to prevent rulers from ruling for their own benefit was to focus upon education to foster virtuous citizens and rulers who would be devoted to the common good.
9. Both Plato and Aristotle were interested in how to promote virtuous citizens.
10. Aristotle pointed out that in a political association a government can be by one, a few, or many.
11. According to Aristotle, the difference between good and bad forms of government is whether the rulers act for the benefit of the governed or their own selfish interests.
12. Aristotle considered democracy a corrupt form of rule by the many people who are poor as opposed to a polity that was ruled by all three social classes identified in ancient thought.
13. According to Aristotle, a “mixed constitution” referred to a government organized so that all three major social classes were represented.
14. The Founders were influenced by the writings of Cicero, who focused heavily on morality, moral duty, and the importance of making sacrifices for the common good.
15. Many colonists were trained in the beliefs of classical republicanism such as achieving human excellence, understanding their interdependence, and achieving the common good.
16. Volunteers working on efforts to improve their communities are examples of the civic virtue embodied in classical republican writings.
17. Classical republicans placed a high value upon individual rights.
18. Contemporary political thought reflects a blend of classical republicanism and the natural rights philosophy.
Section 1, Discussion and Research Questions

Instructions: Respond briefly to each of the following questions.

1. How, if at all, are the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero reflected in today’s civic discourse, actions, and political institutions?
2. Do you think that humans are by nature political animals? Explain your position.
3. Aristotle saw a “polity” as a good form of rule by the many and democracy as a corrupt rule by the poor. A polity had a “mixed” constitution and a rule by a middle class between the rich and poor. Are these distinctions relevant today?
4. Which of Aristotle’s forms of political association most accurately characterize the United States today? What evidence supports your position?
5. What role do you think education should play, if any, in nurturing civic virtue and other traits of character seen as desirable by classical republicans?
6. What kind of education do you think is required to nurture individuals’ realization of their capacities?

Section 2, Review Questions

Instructions: Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1. Thomas Hobbes agreed with Aristotle that human beings by their nature are political animals.
2. Hobbes believed that life in a state of nature would involve continual warfare.
3. According to Hobbes, people enter into a social contract among themselves when they agree to leave a state of nature and form a government to maintain peace and security.
4. Hobbes believed that the social contract would result in the establishment of a democratic political association.
5. Hobbes believed that a government formed by social contract is based on the consent of the individuals agreeing to the contract.
6. The most important difference between social contract theory and Greek and Roman thought is that the focus in social contract theory is on the community rather than the individual.
7. John Locke agreed with Hobbes that governments are created by human beings and do not exist among humans as a result of their nature.
8. Locke argued that the social contract is an agreement among people living in a state of nature to form a civil society, which then must form a government capable of protecting their rights.
9. Locke believed that rights such as those to life, liberty, and property did not exist in a state of nature.
10. Locke agreed with Hobbes that government should have unlimited power in order to maintain peace and security.
11. The Founder’s beliefs in the importance of equality, individual rights, the consent of the governed, popular sovereignty, and limited government reflected the basic elements of the natural rights philosophy articulated by John Locke.

Section 2, Discussion and Research Questions

Instructions: Respond briefly to each of the following questions.
Section 2, Review Questions

Instructions: Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1. The classical republican philosophy dominates the natural rights philosophy in American thought and culture.
2. The idea that all humans are created equal with unalienable rights is central to classical republicanism.
3. The classical republican idea of “happiness” includes economic security, leisure, the opportunity to fulfill one’s unique capacities, and interaction with others to improve everyone’s quality of life.
5. An emphasis on the promotion of happiness and prudence in dealing with public affairs is a characteristic of classical republicanism.
6. The inclusion of a justification for the revolution against the British in the Declaration is in accord with classical republican beliefs.
7. The Virginia Bill of Rights focuses solely on the natural rights philosophy.

Section 3, Discussion and Research Questions

Instructions: Respond briefly to each of the following questions.

1. What examples of contemporary issues can you describe that reflect the tension between classical republican ideas and those of the natural rights philosophy?
2. Why do you think the natural rights philosophy has predominated over classical republicanism in American political thought? What have been the benefits and costs of this predominance?