LECTURE ON DEMOCRACY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Prof. Simone Chambers of the UC, Irvine
Friday, October 9, 2020 - 3:30pm to 5:30pm
Via Zoom (link info below)

The People, the Representative, and the Public Sphere: Rethinking democratic concepts in the face of crisis.

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University of California Irvine

This lecture argues that democratic theory is responding to democratic crisis in innovative and promising ways that not only involve rethinking concepts but also redesigning institutions for the 21st century.

The rise of populism and claims that electoral and plebiscitary success authorizes speaking on behalf of the people has generated an intense revisiting of the concept of the people. A proceduralized idea of the people is taking shape and I argue this has its institutional reflection in innovative designs for referendums. Today we see a new take on representation in the form of sortition and randomly selected citizen assemblies. Here I argue that although this conceptual and institutional innovation holds a lot of promise, it is a mistake to think of sortition as replacing electoral representation rather than perfecting it. Finally, democratic theory has had to confront threats to information acquisition and undistorted communication posed by new technologies. An updated concept of the public sphere is required to address these challenges, one that is capable of informing software design rather than simply lamenting the power of algorithms.

Simone Chambers is Professor of Political Science at the University of California Irvine. She has written and published on such topics as deliberative democracy, referendums, constitutional politics, the public sphere, secularism, rhetoric, civility, and the work of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls. She is working on two book projects, The State of Contemporary Democratic Theory a critical survey of new developments in democratic theory and a book of collected essays: Deliberation and the Future of Democracy: A realistic but not realist political theory.

PLEASE EMAIL JAMIE MAYERFELD, JASONM@UW.EDU, FOR THE ZOOM LINK.

People Involved:  Jamie Mayerfeld

Event Type:  Lectures and Talks

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