

ANARCHISM AND ITS CHALLENGES

Sponsored by the Institute for Humane Studies

Reader Abstract: This reader serves two general purposes. First, to introduce students to the concept and theories of anarchism as a political or ethical ideology. Second, to encourage students to think critically about the role of the state and the challenges of social organization.

Session 1: First Shot – The Case for Anarchism

Hasnas, John. "The Obviousness of Anarchy." In *Anarchism/Minarchism: Is a Government Part of a Free Country?*, edited by Roderick Long & Tibor Machan, 111-131. Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2008.

Leeson, Peter T. "Anarchy Unbound, or: Why Self-Governance Works Better Than You Think." In *Pirates, Collapsed States, and the Possibility of Anarchy. Cato Unbound* ([August 2007](#)): 1-12.

Session Abstract: These readings establish the basic idea that anarchy, as an alternative system of social organization, is *plausible*. They do not make an overt argument in favor of anarchy, but by establishing it as a plausible idea, these readings can help frame the subsequent sessions as to whether or not anarchy is *desirable*. The Hasnas piece covers many of the common objections to anarchy in brief, with particular emphasis on the arbitration question, since Hasnas is a legal philosopher. The Leeson piece offers thought-provoking examples of stateless societies that have existed in history.

Session 2: Reply On Behalf of the State

Burke, Edmund. "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." In *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, edited by Daniel E. Ritchie, 104-114, 159-180. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992.

Holcombe, Randall J. "Government: Unnecessary but Inevitable." *The Independent Review* 8, no. 3 (2004): 325-342.

Session Abstract: The readings in this session object to anarchy as being either undesirable or impossible. The Edmund Burke piece makes a democratic-aristocratic case for liberty that advocates letting people choose their political leaders, but suggesting that they should or will choose the "best" among them – a "natural aristocracy." The Holcombe piece argues a common objection that regardless of the *desirability* of anarchy, individual self-interest makes the establishment of a state inevitable, and positive attempts to establish a state allow people the freedom to establish one more to their liking.

Session 3: Anarchism Strikes Back

Huemer, Michael. "The Problem of Political Authority." In *The Problem of Political Authority*, 2-22. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Goldman, Emma, and Richard Drinnon. "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For." In *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 1-9. New York: Dover Publications, 1969.

Session Abstract: These readings offer a rejoinder to the previous session. The Huemer piece makes a sophisticated argument against political authority as an ethical matter. The Emma Goldman article makes a case for anarchy that resembles a different form of anarchist theory: anarcho-communism and "thick" anarchism, in that it rejects both property and religion. The Goldman piece offers a foil to both the session two anti-anarchism readings and Huemer's relatively pro-capitalism piece.

Session 4: Anarchism, Politics, and Judgment

Nock, Albert Jay. "Anarchist's Progress," and, "On Doing the Right Thing." In *The State of the Union: Essays in Social Criticism*, edited by Charles H. Hamilton, 34-50, 317-325. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991.

Somin, Ilya. Excerpts from, "Do Voters Know Enough," and, "The Rationality of Political Ignorance." In *Democracy and Political Ignorance: Why Smaller government Is Smarter*, 47-73. 2nd edition. Stanford: Sanford University Press, 2016.

Session Abstract: These readings are designed to encourage thought about the political implications of anarchist theory. The Nock readings offer, respectively, an autobiographical account of Nock's transition to anarchism, with the corresponding events that influenced his thought, and an overview on the practical objective of anarchism, with themes on toleration and individualism. The Somin piece offers a critique of democratic governments in light of the characteristics of self-interest and knowledge on the part of voters and elected officials.