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Guiding Questions

Session I: The Moral Crisis of Our Time

- Robert Nisbet suggests the “basic values of modern liberalism” are the individual and the moral sovereignty of the people. Why are those values “wavering in their appeal”?
- Why, according to Solzhenitsyn, is self-limitation an essential part of liberty?
- What is Solzhenitsyn’s primary critique of the modern idea of progress?

Session II: Constitutionalism, the Rule of Law, and Reverence

- What are some of the obstacles that the Constitution faces as it is considered in state ratifying conventions?
- Why is Publius opposed to Jefferson’s mechanism for amending the Constitution?
- According to Lincoln, what are the effects of the spirit of mob rule that he detects in America?
- What is Lincoln’s solution to that unhealthy spirit?

Session III: Law, Habits, and Tradition

- According to Burke, in what sense is society a contract?
- What does Burke see as the role of prejudice in human life?
- In what sense are opinion and sentiment as important as laws for political life?
- What does Roger Scruton suggest he learned from reading Burke?

Session IV: Democracy, Equality, and Liberty

- Why does Tocqueville suggest that the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion belong together?
- Why do democratic peoples love equality more than liberty?
- What does Tocqueville mean by individualism and how do Americans combat it?
- What are some of the key contrasting elements of democracy and aristocracy?
- What kind of despotism should democratic peoples fear?

Session V: The Moral Foundations of Democracy

- How does Plato illuminate the contemporary crisis of democracy?
- What is the contemporary relevance of the dispute between Socrates and Callicles?
- Why does Martin Diamond call the American Revolution a revolution of “sober expectations?”

Session I

The Moral Crisis of Our Time

Readings:

- Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom* (1953), chapter 9, “The Problem of Liberalism.”
- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Solzhenitsyn Reader: New and Essential Writings, 1947-2005*, eds. Edward E. Ericson, Jr. and Daniel J. Mahoney (2009), “We Have Ceased to See the Purpose” (1993).

Session II

Constitutionalism, the Rule of Law, and Reverence

Readings:

- Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist*, eds. George Carey and James McClellan (2001), Nos. 1 & 49 (1788).
- Abraham Lincoln, *Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. Roy Basler (2001), “On the Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions” (1838).

Session III

Law, Habits, and Tradition

Readings:

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), excerpts, in *Conservatism*, ed. Jerry Z. Miller (1997).
- Roger Scruton, *Gentle Regrets: Thoughts from a Life* (2005), chapter 4, “How I Became a Conservative.”

Session IV

Democracy, Equality, and Liberty

Reading:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Sanford Kessler, trans. Stephen D. Grant (2000), excerpts.

Session V

The Moral Foundations of Democracy

Readings:

- John Hallowell, *The Moral Foundation of Democracy* (1954), chapter 6, “The Moral Foundation of Democracy.”
- Martin Diamond, *As Far As Republican Principles Will Admit: Essays by Martin Diamond*, ed. William A. Schambra (1992), chapter 12, “The Revolution in Sober Expectations.”