

Mathematics and Democracy – Historical Assignment 1
Ancient Greece

Due May 5, 2005

Except where noted, none of your responses should exceed half a page. I'm expecting quality, not quantity. Choose your words carefully.

1. Based only on the world you sense around you, make a hypothesis about the nature of the first principle of the cosmos. Defend your claim according to the style of the pre-Socratic philosophers.
2. Identify at least one passage in our philosophical readings where the mathematical deductive style of reasoning is used to demonstrate a point, and explain how it does. Try to find an instance that is as clear as possible.
3. (*based on our in-class exercise*) Give a careful response to Aristotle's claim that only certain classes of people should participate in a democracy. Your statement should genuinely respond to Aristotle's case rather than simply present a different position. Be sure to pose your argument in a style that fits ancient Greek thinking as we discussed in class.
4. (*based on our in-class exercise*) Repeat the above, for Plato's two claims that oligarchy must eventually devolve into democracy, and that democracy must eventually devolve into tyranny.
5. Read the attached article, written by me. You may skip the section on Islam.
 - (a) Explain the article's argument that the Greek stance on the cosmos is a religious world view. Do you agree?
 - (b) Starting from a brief explanation of the "Adversaries versus Authorities" distinction in mathematical style between Greece and China, speculate why you think democracy arose in Greece but not in China.
6. Include your two-page summary of your section on the French Revolution here.