

# Political Realism

Ethics and Public Policy (AEM)

September 19 2024

# The Plan

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- ① What is Political Realism?
- ② Moral Values and Political Advice

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- ④ The Issue of Participation
- ⑤ What is a State For?
- ⑥ Safeguarding the Functions of the State

# What is Political Realism?

- a uniting thought:



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- broadly two models
  - non-ideal theory
  - distinctively political normativity

# Moral Values and Political Advice



# The Specifics of Politics

- power

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- power
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- pluralism
- the basic functions of the state

## Example: the Issue of Participation

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- e.g. citizen referenda
- realists: these demands are ignorant of the specifics of politics

# Participation in Practice

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    - invite feedback to sustain loyalty
    - ultimately use existing powers to decide outcomes

# Empowering Citizens

- not just more participation everywhere

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- try remedying background inequalities
- be wary of the powers of agenda-setting

# What Is a State For?



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- basic order
- security

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- enable cooperation

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- security
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- functions fulfilled by state officials

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- “taxpayer revolt”
- wide tax cuts
- to, among other things, fire departments
- substantially increasing response times
- probably worsened the consequences of wildfires

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- but bureaucrats used their powers to circumvent them
- not raising response times
- is this ethical?

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- can safeguard the basic functions of the state
- in the face of irrational voters
- or powerful elites
- even when that hampers participatory influence!

# Recap

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- political realism as a diverse movement
- but focused on bringing theory closer to political reality
- two example fields:
  - participation (powers and interests)
  - the role of state officials (the function of the state)