

# Week 4 - Presentation

## Important quotes - Rights in the Liberal Tradition, Shklar

"There is only one belief that gives the liberal mind a characteristic continuity: the conviction that human dignity demands personal freedom of thought and action."

"Liberality has since classical antiquity been admired as a kind of generosity, a readiness to share one's goods and time with others."

"..one must have a certain amount of worldly goods to be able to be liberal at all."

"Later liberals who associated liberty with birth and wealth came to disdain it as [a] mere form of class display. Montesquieu, for example, thought poorly of it, a mere form of pride and self-regarding honor."

## Ideas

This page explores the idea of the *liberal tradition* rather than simple "liberalism". More specifically, the liberal tradition explores broad philosophies of politics, but liberalism is a "era-specific" set of ideals. eg. Neo-liberalism, modern liberalism.

Under this guise, we can explore how the Declaration of Independence is really just a natural evolution/product of the the liberal tradition.

This excerpt defines the "liberal tradition" by its sole core value: "that human dignity demands personal freedoms of thought and action."

- The liberal tradition will produce ideas that inherit its values from this core value.

Now, even farther back, the idea of "liberality" was simply defined as the being generous with your personal possessions in response to the needs of others. This seems like a good ideal, but it was easily seen to only be possible for the rich.

- However, this flawed notion of liberality still has a place in the larger liberal tradition because it has a clear regard for **freedom**.
- Those in need are not free, as discussed in [week 2]

## Important quotes - DOI

"...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

- These rights are essentially guaranteed freedoms of action

"That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

- Their governing ideals were so deeply rooted in the liberal tradition that they even state abolishment of the government is justified if the government strays too far from the ideals.

"A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

## Key ideas and speaking points

1. The liberal tradition is a broad philosophy, while liberalism/liberality is a subset of that philosophy, often era-specific.
2. Shklar defines the liberal tradition by its one core value: "human dignity demands personal freedom of thought and action".
3. The classical definition for liberality is to be generous, and give away your personal possessions to those in need.
4. This fits under the liberal tradition umbrella because those in need are inherently unfree.
5. Classical liberality essentially says it is noble to give others the gift of freedom.
6. There is the standard argument that the DOI frees Americans from tyranny and ensures freedoms, but a more interesting argument is to explore how the DOI facilitates this classical definition of liberality.
7. Liberality requires a certain amount of worldly possessions. In order to give, you must first have. The DOI guarantees the "pursuit of happiness", in other words, the pursuit of worldly possession.
8. However, there is some dissonance between these two, because the DOI couples happiness with worldly possessions. This incentivizes people to keep possession for themselves, and even potentially exploit others for personal gain.