

CGSMB International Symposium 2024

The Future of Democracy

Oct 8 - 14, 2024

The Symposium Challenge

Many of the students of member schools of the MBA International Symposium live in societies in which we take democracy as a given, and possibly assume that it is a just and perhaps even natural state of affairs. Nevertheless, in this year of a multitude of consequential elections throughout the world, we need to discuss what we mean by democracy and whether it is, at all times and in all places, fit for purpose. At CGSMBIS 2024 we will examine how democracy – and its various forms – have evolved into their present state across societies (particularly of MBIS schools), what alternative systems of government have existed and might exist, how (well) democracy is functioning in the modern world, and what might be the future of democracy. There is no better place to do this than at CGS, since Australia takes the rare approach to democracy of compulsory voting, and has also recently experienced – as has the UK – a divisive and controversial form of democracy: the referendum.

The challenge of the CGSMB International Symposium 2024 is for students, after examining the evolution of democracy, its various forms, its alternatives, and its potential future, to consider the outlook for democratic and non-democratic systems of government around the world, and suggest practical steps we can take to best ensure a successful future of democracy.

Over the first ten years of the Winchester International Symposium we considered a range of fascinating topics, each with unique importance and relevance to the host school; this is the fourth year of the Montgomery Bell International Symposium and that central purpose remains. Two factors common to each symposium have been the intellectual talent and commitment of the students, and the distinct cultural backgrounds that have so illuminated their contributions. In other words, a shared scholarship together with a unique cultural perspective have created an extremely fertile forum for discussing ideas. This will be as relevant and important as ever this year: at CGSMBIS we aim to look specifically at the issue of democracy and government in our different societies, to identify the unique as well as common forces that have contributed to our different systems of government, to examine alternative forms of government that have been and are practised around the world, and to look at the future of democracy; also to look at the particular governmental challenges our various democracies face, and to propose practical solutions to those challenges.

Students from the group of Symposium schools will come together in Canberra in October 2024, after having worked online for six months on the topic areas overleaf. Each school will draft a monthly 750-word response to a particular question set within each topic area; the response will follow a month of discussion of the issues arising from an introductory essay. The response will be posted online in the shared *Google* group, and submitted to TJP. Students will thus have a further week in which they are expected to comment on others' submitted responses.

As before, TJP will send participating students the introductory essay on each topic area, together with required and suggested reading, on the dates overleaf. Intermediate tasks – such as reading relevant articles, watching YouTube or TED talks, listening to podcasts – will also be assigned as appropriate. Students will again be encouraged to form their own social media group to become acquainted before the Symposium.

Student pairs will pursue a personal project which will examine one aspect of their own system of democracy. The specific project must gain prior approval. Students must submit their completed project presentations to TJP, by means of *YouTube* upload (or other common video format) one month before the beginning of the Symposium; this will allow for greater consistency, as well as for accurate time management at the Symposium. Completed and approved projects will be presented at CGSMBIS.

At CGSMBIS 2024, students will discuss ideas during daily debates, listen to expert speakers, and respond to prompts that will allow them to use their online work. These responses will take the form of short presentations. At the end of the week, students will come together to draft The Symposium Accord, which will be a common response to The Symposium Challenge.

Symposium Online Topic Schedule (and deadlines)

March 15, 2024 (Apr 15, 2024)	The Evolution of Democracy; essay posted by TJP Students submit essays to TJP and post online for general comment
April 22, 2024 (May 22, 2024)	Democracy and Alternative Forms of Government; essay posted by TJP Students submit essays to TJP and post online for general comment
May 29, 2024 (June 29, 2024)	Democracy in the Modern World; essay posted by TJP students submit essays to TJP and post online for general comment
Aug 15, 2024 (Sep 15, 2024)	The Future of Democracy; essay posted by TJP Students submit essays to TJP and post online for general comment
May 22, 2024	Deadline for Personal Project approval
May - Sept, 2024 (Sept 22, 2024)	Personal Project work Students submit completed personal projects to TJP

Block 1 (March 15 – April 15): The Evolution of Democracy

Theories of the evolution of democracy, notably Athens and the city state. Alternative theories about the origins of democracy. History of the Roman Republic and Empire. Monarchy and constitutional monarchy in the UK; Magna Carta, the Civil War. Various approaches to universal suffrage (with particular reference to voting rights for women). The US War of Independence; no taxation without representation. Decolonisation and approaches to government and democracy thereafter.

Block 2 (April 22 – May 22): Democracy and Alternative Forms of Government

Forms of democracy, including voting systems (first-past-the-post, proportional representation). Constitutional monarchies versus republics. Military dictatorships, authoritarianism, theocracies, Cold War politics, post-war government in East Asia. The (in)stability of democracy; revolution, military coups, constitutional change.

Block 3 (May 29 – June 29): Democracy in the Modern World

Democratic systems as practiced today, notably in MBIS societies. 2024 as an election year (not least in the United States). Nationalist, separatist and devolutionist pressures in Australia, UK, Spain, Ireland. The particular approach of Australia to compulsory voting. Referenda, with particular reference to Brexit and The Voice. Democracy and populism.

Block 4 (Aug 15 – Sep 15): The Future of Democracy

The importance of information and education to democracy. Threats of manipulation and artificial intelligence. Issues of compulsory voting, voting age, even ideas of educational or intelligence requirements. The prevalence and influence of social media. Democracy and engagement. Disillusionment with democracy, especially amongst the young.

Personal projects (May - Sept, 2024. Deadline Sep 22, 2024):

Students must complete an independent and original investigation into an aspect of the future of democracy of their choice, but from their home country, concentrating on one of the four themes above. The project must be approved by TJP by **May 22, 2024**. The completed investigation must be uploaded or sent as a video presentation by **Sep 22, 2024 and take no more than ten minutes to present in total**; this will be the same presentation that the students will give at CGSMBIS and will simply enable TJP to be assured of the content and timing; the presentation at CGSMBIS should *not* include video, but may include slides to reinforce or illustrate points.

February, 2024