

The
Scholars
Programme



I've Got the Power: What's Wrong with the Rule by One?

Key Stage 5 Programme

Pupil Name

Tutorial
Group

Coursebook
Designed by

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Course Rationale

When we think about what the abuse of power may be, we normally imagine a person with authority making bad decisions or performing cruel acts (like a despot or dictator!). However, this is not the only way (maybe not even the most fundamental way!) in which power may be abused. In this course, we will explore a particular way in which our heads of government (namely, our presidents or prime ministers) may abuse their power.

We will call this particular way of abusing power “unilateral executive power” and will define it as “a form of arbitrary power exercised exclusively by the head of government and not meaningfully constrained by the constitution, its laws, or any other political actor or institution”. As we will learn, this form of arbitrary power may allow our heads of government not only to exercise their power in potentially wrongful ways that violate our fundamental human rights, but also to make decisions and perform acts that are based on their personal choice, instead of on any accepted reason.

In the first tutorial, we will define what the executive is, what it does, and how it may abuse its power. In the second tutorial, we will distinguish between two different ways of constraining the exercise of power by the executive and will discuss whether they are successful in doing so. In the third tutorial, we will distinguish between the concepts of “domination” and “interference” and will discuss what kind of abuse of power the exercise of “unilateral executive power” may be. In the fourth tutorial, we will distinguish between the exercise of oppressive power and the exercise of “unilateral executive power” and will discuss what exactly makes each of them problematic. In the fifth tutorial, we will review what we have learned so far and will prepare for the final assignment!

In this course, you will develop argumentative, critical thinking and writing skills that will enable you to challenge common ways of thinking about the abuse of power and to defend your own ideas about what may be wrong with the exercise of oppressive power and the exercise of “unilateral executive power”!



Big Ben by Adi Ulici. <https://unsplash.com/photos/0cpbRazaQaY>

Front cover image: *Power Struggles* by Thomas Charters. <https://unsplash.com/photos/zAi2Is48-MA>

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Sample Tutorial Activity



10 Downing Street by Jordhan Madec. <https://unsplash.com/photos/AD5yID2TOUY>

Odd One Out

- Look at the images on the following pages and take a minute to think: "Who is the executive?"
- Discuss your thoughts with the person sitting next to you and, together, write the name of the person portrayed below each picture.
- Finally, write what (or who) you think the executive is and what you think it (or he, or she) does.

All images taken from Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page





What (or who) is the executive? What does it (or he, or she) do?

Comprehension Questions

1. According to Locke, what is the legislative power (§ 143)?

2. Why does Locke argue that “it may be too great a temptation... for the same persons who have the power of making laws, to have also in their hands the power to execute them” (§ 143)?

3. According to Locke, what is the executive power (§ 144)?

4. Why does Locke claim that the legislative power and the executive power should be separated (§ 144)?

5. According to Locke, what is the federative power (§ 145 - § 146)?

Think, Pair, Share

- Go back to your answers to questions 2 and 4. Do you agree with Locke that power may be abused if it is not separated into “legislative power” and “executive power”? If so, how exactly?
- Discuss the following questions with the person sitting next to you: How do you think that the executive power may be abused? Can you think of any real-life cases in which the executive power has been abused?
- Share your thoughts with the rest of the class. How do you think that the abuse of the executive power may be prevented?