

# POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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## The Limits of Sovereign Authority

### Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

### Reading

Locke, J. (2008, March). [Chapters 11, 13, 17–19]. In J. Bennet (Ed. & Trans.), *Second treatise of government* (pp. 43–46, 48–52, 65–79). Early Modern Texts. <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf> (Original work from 1689)

### Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. What limits does John Locke place on how the state may legitimately exercise its power?
2. What is usurpation? Why is not a legitimate form of sovereign authority?
3. What does Locke mean by tyranny, and how is it different from usurpation? Based on this, can a democracy also be/become tyrannical?
4. What defense does Locke make for giving people the right to revolt against usurpation and tyranny, thereby dissolving their government?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.