

Democracy 4 Dahl on What Democracy Is

Please read Chapter 4, “What is Democracy?” from Robert Dahl’s *On Democracy*. After reading the chapter, answer the questions that follow.

1. What's the basic principle of democracy, according to Dahl? Why does this come first in his understanding of democracy?
2. What five criteria does Dahl identify as necessary for any regime to count as democratic? Do any of these strike you as odd or surprising?
3. Why are each of these required for political equality? Why, in particular, is control over the agenda important?
4. Should we be bothered by the likelihood that no actually existing polity is likely to meet the five criteria of a democracy?
5. Does the size of modern states make the quest for democracy impossible?
6. How well do you think the United States today fulfills these five criteria? Be specific.