The Liberal Arts Program presents

Liberal Arts Guest Speaker Series
“Postdemocratisation: End of History Revisited?”

Lecturer Paul-Erik Korvela (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

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ABSTRACT INFO: In his famous book “The End of History and The Last Man” (1992) Francis Fukuyama argued that liberal democracy has conquered all its opponents and will be the endpoint of history. Two decades afterwards we can say that the book was too optimistic in many respects. The lecture highlights a hitherto rather unnoticed aspect in this discussion, namely the fact that liberal democracy might not face any notable external challengers but nevertheless faces threats endemic to itself. Certain developments and trends are transforming, or have already transformed, the established democracies of the West into postdemocracies (Crouch 2009), managed democracies (Wolin 2008) or controlled democracies (Burnham 1941). Even though there might not arise any external challengers to democracy in the future, it does develop, through its internal dynamics, into something else, something that can be best described as postdemocracy. Postdemocratic states will retain the outlook of a democracy while in practice they have transformed into a sort of managed or controlled democracy. The legitimacy of rule is theoretically based on the sovereignty of the people expressed in free elections, but in practice both the democratic input and output of the political system can be merely nominal. While there is a lot of scholarly attention being paid to democratisation, democracy transition, semi-democracies and democratic masquerading of dictatorship, there is considerably less research on postdemocratisation, i.e. established democracies sliding away from democracy or going beyond it.

BIO: Dr. Paul-Erik Korvela (b. 1977) is a lecturer of political science at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. He has done research on political theory and international relations, especially on Machiavelli, conceptual history of key concepts of IR, postdemocracy, democracy in the EU, and Italian Fascism. He has given courses in political science, international relations and management at the universities of Jyväskylä, Tampere and Helsinki. He has been a visiting scholar at the European University Institute, University of Verona and City University of Hong Kong.