Write a 750-word essay on the following topic. Your essay is due in CLA 251 by 4 PM on FRIDAY February 5. Please include a title (not on a separate page), single space, and use both sides of a single sheet of paper. Also, please include a word count.

Which is the better form of republicanism, Jefferson’s majoritarianism or Madison’s pluralism?

Be sure to use direct quotations from the reading to bolster your argument, cite the page number in parentheses after the quotation, and define your terms with care. Finally, be sure to include at least one claim-objection-rejoinder sequence.

Before 1776, the colonists were united in demanding a republican form of government; they meant government whose authority derived from and was accountable to the people. The revolutionaries drew upon English Whig theories of legitimate authority, which emphasized opposition to the corrupt “court” by virtuous “country” citizens committed to the public good. But after a decade of experience as thirteen separate states united loosely under the Articles of Confederation, most agreed that the national government overseeing the federation—i.e., the “federal” government—would need to be strengthened. Even strong Anti-federalists like Melancton Smith of New York agreed that American Neo-Whig republican principles needed to be adjusted to fit a larger, national setting.

But how should the new republican synthesis control corruption? Should socially homogeneous majorities check the power of the government? Examples here include Jefferson’s plan for constitutional change (see Federalist #49) or his theory of generational change (see Matthews, 19-22)? Or should social heterogeneity be enlisted to check the power of majorities forming inside the government and those forming in society? Examples here include Madison’s checks and balances or his use of large constituencies to multiply diverse interests. Jefferson favored the first approach which might be called majoritarian. It assumes that humans are naturally sociable, that human psychology is plastic and formable (see Matthews, 45), and that the civic virtue of the majority can be cultivated in ward republics. Madison favored the second or more pluralist approach, which he bases on the assumption that human nature is passionate and self-interested, but given time for reflection, open to reason and deliberation.

The two authors signal their different approaches through their different definitions and uses of the word ‘republicanism’. For Madison, the key point about republicanism is that it promotes government “that derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people” (Wootton, 226). For Jefferson it is government where “every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns” (Matthews, 78). As they develop these terms, it is clear that Madison intends to use the operation of his “compound republic” (248) to defeat majority faction, or as he puts it “to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part” (248). Jefferson too envisions a compound republic. But his “republics of the ward, the county republics, the state republics, and the republic of the Union” (82) overlap. All four, but especially the first, train citizens to govern themselves and cultivate in them stances of independence and love of liberty. Even as Jefferson concedes to John Adams that all societies feature a “natural aristocracy” (Cappon, 388)—whose members greatly influence and rightly should influence the majority—he still intends the majority to rule with a “simple yea or nay” vote (Matthews, 85).