

Professor Peter LaVenia
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MWF 10:25-11:20 AM
SS 116

SYLLABUS – POS 301 – Ancient to Modern Political Theory

I

Course Description & Learning Objectives

Course Description:

This course is the first in a sequence of two special topics in political theory courses. While each course can be completed independently of the other, students are encouraged to enroll in both courses.

In this course we will be studying a number of the principle texts and thinkers of western political thought, from the Ancient Greeks to the Renaissance—Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Machiavelli. We will engage these texts in chronological order, and assume that they belong to contiguous tradition of political thought that has developed in the west. Aside from a few brief scholarly articles, our attention will be on primary texts.

Our principal emphasis will be on the contributions these thinkers have made to a “special tradition of discourse”—western political thought. Therefore, while we will be sensitive to historical context—that is, the circumstances of the authors and the audience they were addressing—our focus will be on the transcontextual and universal political ideas, concepts, principles, and vocabulary of those thinkers. Specifically, we will examine each thinker in light of these categories: government (form and purpose), justice, citizenship, authority, power, virtue, community, political judgment, political knowledge, political nature, and political vision.

Students will be expected to appreciate these texts as an end in themselves, but also to gain insight into what is involved in thinking and discussing about politics, and acting politically. By studying the “political vision” of past political thinkers we can begin learning how to **THINK POLITICALLY** for ourselves.

Course Learning Objectives:

In order to successfully complete this course each student must, by the end of the term, demonstrate that they have accomplished the following objectives:

- Demonstrate the ability to describe and differentiate between various political thinkers in terms of their understanding of: government (form and purpose), justice, citizenship, authority, power, virtue, community, political judgment, political knowledge, political nature, and political vision.
- Demonstrate the cultivation of a personal political vision.
- Demonstrate effective critical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills.

II

Course Texts

The **REQUIRED** texts for this course are available for purchase at the campus bookstore or Mary Jane’s. You may also purchase these texts at www.amazon.com or www.bookfinder.com, **but be sure to purchase the correct translations and editions!**

- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Wick (Modern Library)
- Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. Trans. Grube (Hackett)

- Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Grube & Reeve (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *The Politics*. Trans. Reeve (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *The Ethics*. Trans. Irwin. (Hackett)
- Augustine, *The Political Writings*. Trans. Tkacz and Kries (Hackett)
- Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*. Trans. Baumgrath & Regan (Hackett)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Trans. Mansfield. (Chicago)
- Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy*. Trans. Mansfield & Tarcov (Chicago)
- Course reader.

III Course Requirements & Specifics

Grade

Your grade will be based on 2 take home essays (10-12 pages) and weekly analysis papers (2-3 pages) worth 25% each. 25% will be awarded towards the final grade depending on class participation, with the final discretion of the professor. There will be no extra credit offered.

Attendance

It is expected that you will make every effort to attend class. Attendance will be taken regularly, and will factor into your class participation grade. However, it is understood that during the course of the semester unexpected events may occur; therefore, you are allowed up to 2 unexcused absences before your grade is impacted negatively.

Reading Assignments: The nature of our subject matter demands careful and critical reading. The reading load will be moderately heavy: approximately 100-120 pages per week, with a few exceptions. Your instructor appreciates the fact that students have other classes and other obligations. Nevertheless, students will not be able to pass this course if they do not complete the assigned reading. Students will be expected to have read and thought about each week's assigned readings prior to each class meeting.

Weekly Critical Analysis Papers: During the term students will be required to write a weekly 2-3 page (typed, double-spaced, and cited) critical analysis paper addressing the concepts and themes expressed in the reading assignments. Each week the instructor will distribute a selection of thought questions on which students will write. Students may be asked to present what they have written to the class. The objectives of this assignment are to induce you to complete the reading, to prepare you for class discussion, and to encourage you to think critically about the material. Papers will be due in class. Late papers will not be accepted. You may, however, miss one paper with no penalty. These short papers will be completed in lieu of a large research paper.

Mid-term & Final Papers: 50% of your grade will be acquired by completing the required two 10-12 page papers. Papers will be due around the mid-point of the term and at the end, respectively. Papers will not be formally cumulative. However, you will be expected to answer thematic questions and integrate material from several thinkers in order to demonstrate that you are thinking analytically, synthesizing material, making connections, and seeing the "big picture" so to speak. Some attention will be paid to academic improvement. That is, if students demonstrate consistent improvement over the course of the term they will be rewarded. Make-up provisions will be offered only for those students who cannot complete a paper at the scheduled time for well-substantiated reasons of health and personal emergency. The instructor, prior to the paper due date, must clear excuses.

IV
Course Schedule*

Jan. 23 - Course Introduction—Welcome!

Jan. 25, 28, 30
The Practice of Political Thought

Required Reading:

- George Sabine. *What is a Political Theory?*
- Sheldon S. Wolin. *Political Philosophy and Philosophy.*
- Leo Strauss. *What is Political Philosophy?*
- John G. Gunnell. *The Myth of the Tradition.*

Suggested Reading—The Practice of Political Thought:

- Hannah Arendt. *Between Past and Future*
- Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*
- John G. Gunnell. *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation*
- Charles Taylor. “Interpretation and the Science of Man” and “Political Theory and Political Practice.” in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences.*
- A. Quinton, ed. *Political Philosophy*
- Michael Oakeshott. *Rationalism in Politics*
- J.G.A. Pocock. *Politics, Language, and Time*
- Thomas Spragens. *Understanding Political Theory*
- George Kateb. *Political Theory: Its Nature and Uses*
- Thomas P. Jenkin. *The Study of Political Theory*

Feb 1, 4, 6 -Thucydides: The Crisis of the Polis—Democracy, Empire, Leadership, and Political Judgment

Required Reading:

- *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 1-130, 154-202, (220-270 recommended but not required), 306-314 (par. 14-27).

Suggested Reading—Greek Political Concepts and Culture:

- A.W. H Adkins. *Merit and Responsibility*
- A.W.H Adkins. *Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece*
- M.I. Finley. *The Ancient Greeks*
- M.I. Finley. *Democracy: Ancient and Modern*
- M.I. Finley. *Politics and the Ancient World*
- E.R. Dodds. *The Greeks and the Irrational*
- W.K.C. Guthrie. *The Greeks and their Gods*
- Victor Ehrenberg. *The Greek State*
- Victor Ehrenberg. *From Solon to Socrates*
- Eric Havelock. *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*
- Eric Havelock. *The Concept of Justice*
- A.H.M. Jones. *Athenian Democracy*
- Mogens Herman Hansen. *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*

- W.G. Forrest. *The Emergence of Greek Democracy*
- H.D.F. Kitto. *The Greeks*
- Werner Jaeger. *Paidea: The Ideals of Greek Culture* 3 vols. (esp. vol. 1)
- Bruno Snell. *The Discovery of the Mind*
- T.A. Sinclair. *A History of Greek Political Thought*
- A.W. Gomme. *Essays in Greek History and Thought*
- Sarah Pomeroy. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*
- J.P. Vernant. *The Origins of Greek Thought*
- A. Zimmerman. *The Greek Commonwealth*
- A. Andrews. *The Greek Tyrants*
- Martha Nussbaum. *The Fragility of Goodness*
- Philip Brook Manville. *The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens*

Suggested Reading—Thucydides:

- Francis M. Cornford. *Thucydides Mythistoricus*
- John H. Finley, Jr. *Thucydides*
- Werner Jaeger. *Paidea: The Ideals of Greek Culture* 3 vols. (vol. 1, book 2, chap. 6)
- T.A. Sinclair. *A History of Greek Political Thought* (chap. 6)
- W. Robert Connor. *Thucydides*
- J.B. Bury. *The Ancient Greek Historians* (chap. 3)
- G.F. Abbott. *Thucydides: A Study in Historical Reality*
- F. E. Adcock. *Thucydides and his History*
- T.S. Brown. *The Greek Historians*
- C.N. Cochrane. *Thucydides and the Science of History*
- A.W. H Adkins. *Merit and Responsibility*
- A.W.H Adkins. *Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece*
- David Grene. *Greek Political Theory*
- Donald Kagen. *The Peloponnesian War*

Feb. 6, 8, 11

Thucydides: continued

Required Reading:

- *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 349-378, 378-416 (through par. 93), 449-481, 505-527.

Feb 11, 13, 15

Plato: Socrates—The Philosopher and the Polis

Required Reading:

- *The Apology* and *Crito*.
- *The Republic*, Books 1-3.

Suggested Reading—Plato and Socrates:

- Plato. *The Laws*
- Plato. *The Statesman*
- Ernest Barker. *Greek Political Theory*
- G.M.A. Grube. *Plato's Thought*
- Eric Havelock. *Preface to Plato*
- Paul Friedlander. *Plato: An Introduction*
- Werner Jaeger. *Paidea: The Ideals of Greek Culture* 3 vols. (vol. 2 pp. 198-365; vol. 3 pp. 213-262)
- Alvin Gouldner. *Enter Plato*
- A.E. Taylor. *Plato: The Man and his Work*
- Susan Moller Okin. *Women in Western Political Thought* (chaps. 1-3)
- Leo Strauss. *Natural Right and History* (chaps. 3-4)
- Gregory Vlastos. *Platonic Studies*
- Sheldon Wolin. *Politics and Vision* (chap. 2)

- W.K.C. Guthrie. *Socrates*
- W.K.C. Guthrie. *The Sophists*
- Richard Kraut. *Socrates and the State*
- George Klosko. *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*

Feb. 20, 22, 25

Plato: The Problem of Justice

Required Reading:

- *The Republic*, Books 4-10.

Feb. 27, 29, Mar. 3

Aristotle: The Idea of Citizenship

Required Reading:

- *The Politics*, Books 1, 2, 3, 4 (chapters 1-13), 5 (chapters 1-9), 6, 7 (chapters 1-4, 9, 13).

Suggested Reading—Aristotle:

- A.W.H Adkins. *Merit and Responsibility* (chaps. 15-16)
- Ernest Barker. *Greek Political Theory*
- George H. Sabine. *A History of Political Theory* (chaps. 5-7)
- J. Mulligan. *Aristotle's Political Theory*
- Leo Strauss. *The City and Man*
- Leo Strauss. *Natural Right and History*
- J.M. Cooper. *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*
- W.F.R. Hardie. *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*
- Richard Rorty, ed. *Essays in Aristotle's Ethics*
- W.D. Ross. *Aristotle*
- Susan Moller Okin. *Women in Western Political Thought* (chap. 4)
- Curtis Johnson. *Aristotle's Theory of the State*

Mar. 5, 7, 10

Aristotle: The Problem of Human Excellence

Required Reading:

- *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1-4.

MID-TERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Mar. 12, 14, 17

Augustine: Christianity and Politics—The Two Cities

Required Reading:

- *Political Writings*, pp. 1-35, 40-44, 58-67 (chapters 3, 5, 6, 8, 10) 74-77, 88-91, 92-94, 108-109, 110-114, 130-131, 139 (chapter 24), 140-163, 205-212.

Suggested Reading—Christian and Medieval Political Theory:

- C.N. Cochrane. *Christianity and Classical Culture*
- Rudolf Bultman. *Primitive Christianity*
- Sheldon Wolin. *Politics and Vision* (chap. 4)

- Herbert Deane. *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*
- R.H. Barrow. *Introduction to St. Augustine*
- J.N. Figgis. *Political Aspects of the City of God*
- Otto von Guericke. *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*
- Leo Strauss. *Natural Right in History*
- Walter Ullman. *Medieval Political Thought*
- R. Lerner, ed. *Medieval Political Philosophy*

Mar. 19, 31, Apr. 1

Aquinas: Christianity and Politics—Natural Law

Required Reading:

- *Political Writings*, pp. Book 2, Book 3, Book 6, Book 7.

April 3-21

Machiavelli: Ethics and the Art of the State

Required Reading:

- *The Prince*. Entire

Suggested Reading:

- Sheldon Wolin. *Politics and Vision* (chap. 7)
- Quentin Skinner. *Machiavelli*
- Quentin Skinner. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (vol. 1, chaps 5-6)
- J.G.A Pocock. *The Machiavellian Moment*
- F. Meinicke. *Machiavellianism*
- Isaiah Berlin. “The Question of Machiavelli” in *Against the Current*
- George H. Sabine. *History of Political Theory* (chap. 17)
- Ernst Cassirer. *The Myth of the State*
- Leo Strauss. *Thoughts on Machiavelli*
- Antonio Gramsci. *The Modern Prince*
- Felix Gilbert. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*
- Mark Hulling. *Citizen Machiavelli*
- F. Chabot. *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*
- Charles Singleton. “The Perspective of Art” in *Kenyon Review*, vol. 15
- M. Merleau-Ponty. “A Note on Machiavelli” in *Signs*
- J.W. Whitfield. *Machiavelli*
- Eugene Garver. *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence*

April 23 – May 2

Machiavelli: Power and Popular Republicanism

Required Reading:

- *The Discourses on Livy*, Book 1, Book 2 (preface, chapters 1, 2, 15, 19, 29), Book 3 (chapters 1, 7-9, 22, 29, 31, 34, 41).

May 5

Course Conclusion

**FINAL PAPER DUE Wed May 14TH BY 5:30 PM. LEAVE PAPERS
IN MY DEPARTMENT BOX**