POLITICAL SCIENCE 301 (4305)  
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT I:  
ANCIENT GREEKS THROUGH MACHIAVELLI  
Fall 2009

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Tues/Thurs 1:15-2:35  
ES 242  
Office Hours: Humanities B16  
Tues/Thurs 2:45-3:45 & by appt.

**Course Objectives**  
1. To understand and critically assess significant political writings of the ancient and medieval periods, including key concepts and debates.  
2. To understand the historical context that gave rise to these concepts and debates.  
3. To analyze their relevance and value for contemporary politics.  
4. Develop critical thinking skills to be applied in reading, writing, and discussion.

This course fulfills the General Education requirement in the category of Europe. Students will be able to demonstrate:  
1. an understanding of the variety of cultures, regions, and countries that make up Europe.  
2. knowledge of the distinctiveness of Europe as manifested in the development of diverse histories, institutions, economies, societies, and cultures  
3. knowledge of the relationship between Europe and other regions of the world as expressed through political, economic, and cultural contact  
4. an understanding of how the knowledge that becomes the basis of historical inquiry is constructed

**Course Description**  
In this course, we will consider key texts in the early history of Western political thought from ancient Greeks (Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle) and Romans (Cicero), early Christians (Augustine and Aquinas), and Renaissance Italy (Machiavelli). This is the first semester of a two-course sequence. You are strongly encouraged, but not required, to continue the sequence in the spring term on modern political thought.

The course begins with the deceptively simple question: What is politics? As the course progresses, this question leads us to a host of other challenging questions: What defines a political community? Who participates? What is the role of culture, education, religion, economics, and art in defining political activity and identity? What can a polity demand of its citizens? How can citizens effect changes in their social and political arrangements?

We will start in the theater of ancient Athens and culminate with the counsel of Renaissance Florentines to pursue questions of power and justice, equality and freedom, the relationship between citizen and polity, and the place of dissent and disagreement in democratic society. Furthermore, we will consider also how these different texts invite us to conceptualize and imagine politics in a variety of ways: through tragedy, history, dialogue, logical demonstration, and practical advice. With these different styles of political theory as models, we will explore how we should go about the study of politics.
Required Texts
The following texts are required for this course and are available for purchase at the University bookstore and at Mary Jane Books (corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street). There will be a few additional readings made available on-line through Blackboard (marked by ** in schedule of readings).

Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates*, tr. G. M. A. Grube (Hackett, 2001)
Augustine, *Political Writings*, tr. Kries and Tkacz (Hackett, 1994)
Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett, 1994)

Course Requirements
As a student in this course, you are required to:
- Attend class.
- Arrive on time.
- Complete all readings by the assigned date.
- Come to class prepared to participate actively in discussions on the assigned readings.
- Bring assigned texts to class with you.

** The use of laptops in class is strongly discouraged.

Evaluation
Students will be assessed in the course based on the following criteria:
Midterm: 25%; Paper 25%; Participation: 20%; Final Exam: 30%

Exams: Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a midterm and final examination. Exams will consist of identifications and an in-class essay. Identifications will require you to identify a passage from the assigned readings, interpret its meaning, and explain its significance. In-class essays ask you to formulate an argument in response to a question and defend it using evidence from readings and lectures. The final exam will test you on material from readings and lectures from the entire semester. No make-up examinations, early examinations, or incomplete grades will be given, except in the event of serious personal or family illness or other extraordinary circumstances for which appropriate documentation must be provided.

Paper: A short paper (3-5 pages) will give you the opportunity to develop an argument based on a careful analysis of political theory text(s). You will be asked to respond to a question (out of a choice of at least two) and support your argument through evidence from assigned readings. You must be sure to cite (page numbers in the body of the essay) all of the passages or ideas taken from other authors. The paper is meant as a means of evaluating your skills in reading and interpretation, so no research beyond the assigned texts is required. Citing non-academic sources, especially from the internet, is strongly discouraged and will likely result in a lower grade.
You will be required to submit two copies of your paper: 1) on paper at the beginning of class on the due date; and 2) electronically through Blackboard’s Safe Assign, a program that evaluates the originality of written work. The purpose of SafeAssign is to guard against academic dishonesty by judging whether essays draw from sources without citation. For more information on SafeAssign, see http://www.albany.edu/its/bls/safe_assign.htm.

**Participation:** Worth 20% of the course grade, participation is highly valued in this course and is essential for your success. The greater the quality and quantity of your participation, the more rewarding the class will be for everyone. You should always walk into class prepared with some contribution: a question, an interesting observation about the text, and/or an opinion on the readings. When the material is particularly difficult is the best time to bring questions about particular passages or key terms.

The participation grade is based on three components:

1) **Attendance:** Attendance will be taken each week, but attendance alone is insufficient to receive full credit for participation. Missing more than two (2) classes, lateness, or arriving unprepared to lecture will guarantee a grade of a C or lower.

2) **Class Discussion:** Each student is expected to regularly make an *active and thoughtful* contribution to class discussions. This includes asking questions, offering observations about the readings and formulating opinions. You are particularly encouraged to respectfully respond to your fellow students’ thoughts and opinions.

3) **In-class assignments:** In-class assignments will consist of writing a short piece, one page or less, that will be used to test your understanding of the reading. **In-class assignments will be given without notice periodically throughout the semester.** There will be no opportunity to make up missed in-class assignments. Missed assignments will be disregarded in the case of documented, excused absences.

**Excused Absences**

Students who are sick are strongly encouraged to stay home as necessary. For this reason, two absences will not be counted against your grade. This policy **DOES NOT APPLY TO EXAM DATES.** If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the **dean of undergraduate studies** (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected.

**Reasonable accommodation**

“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html)).”

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please also inform the instructor as soon as possible. In addition, the instructor will make every effort to accommodate difficulties arising from religious observance. You are asked to bring any
possible conflicts to the instructor’s attention as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and are rarely granted after retroactively.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**
Cheating on an exam or plagiarizing written work will result in failure in the course and referral of the case to a university committee. For more information, please see the undergraduate bulletin: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

**Improvement**
In cases where you have shown marked improvement over the term, I will take this into consideration in computing final course grades.

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments**
**This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.**

I. Introduction: What is politics?
   a. Sept. 1 – Introduction to the Greek Polis

II. Greek Citizenship and the Theater
   a. **Sept. 3 – No Class Meeting; Read Antigone**
   b. Sept. 8 – Sophocles, Antigone (entire play)

III. Democracy and Empire: Athens at War
   a. Sept 10 – Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, Book I
   b. Sept 15: Thucydides, Book II, 124-164
   c. Sept 17: Thucydides, III, 194-245
   d. Sept 22: Thucydides V: 400-408/ Plato, Trial and Death of Socrates: Apology

IV. Socrates: The Philosopher in the City
   a. Sept 24: Plato, Trial and Death of Socrates: Apology and Crito

V. Plato: The Just City in Philosophy
   a. Sept 29 – Plato, Republic, Bk 1-2
   **Short Paper due Tuesday, Sept 29 at the beginning of class**
   b. Oct 1 – Plato, Republic, Bk 3-4
   c. Oct 6 – Plato, Republic, Bks 5-6
   d. Oct 8 – Plato, Republic, Bks 7-8
   e. Oct. 13 – Plato, Republic, Bks 9-10

VI. Aristotle: The Study of Politics
   b. Oct 20 – Aristotle 3-4
   c. Oct 22 – Aristotle 5 and midterm review

**October 27: Midterm Exam**
VII. Roman Political Thought: Republican and Imperial Power  

VIII. Early Christian Political Thought: The City of God and Man  
b. Nov 5 – Augustine, *City of God* X.14, 11-14  
c. Nov 10 – Augustine, *City of God* Bks 18, 19, 22; Aquinas, “On Kingship”

IX. The Scholastic Return to Aristotle: Natural Law and Political Order  
b. Nov 12 – Aquinas, Summa (selections)**

X. The Humanist Return to the Romans: Virtù and Fortuna  
   **November 25: Thanksgiving, no class** **

December 3 Final Review

**Final Exam** **Wednesday, December 9, 10:30am – 12:30pm**