Course length: Aug. 28th – Dec. 10th
Meeting times: Tuesdays, Thursdays 8:45 am – 10:05 am
Room: FA 126
Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis
Political Science Department
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Office location: Humanities building, ground floor, room: B16
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Course Description

The history of Western political theory is closely related to the concept and political practice of democracy. The notion of “political philosophy” emerged as a philosophical-theoretical attempt to “deal” with, reflect upon, and critique democracy as a form of the organization of political life and culture—hence, the strenuous relationship between certain political-philosophical ideas and democratic practice in the past. In this course, we will trace the development of political thought from antiquity to the medieval era, focusing on key concepts of political theory that remain “caught” between the ideals of democracy and political practice even today: citizenship, popular power, governance, equality, freedom. We will follow a historical trajectory of political theory, beginning with a specific overview of the lives, culture, and thought of the ancient Greeks. We’ll read, discuss, and analyze some of the key works of ancient thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, followed by Roman thinker and political figure Cicero and thinkers of the later, medieval period: John of Salisbury, Thomas Aquinas, and Marsiglio of Padua.

This course is also an exercise in a critical, theoretical thinking therefore, while the course is technically a lecture, we will proceed in a form of a seminar based on exchange of ideas, discussions, valuations and re-valuations of key arguments represented in assigned texts. Overall, the course consists of an in-depth reading of assigned texts, discussions and intensive class sessions, which will require your active participation and substantive contribution. The course does not have traditional form exams instead, for your mid-term and final exams you will be required to write academic research papers. In addition, there will be homework assignments, as well as unscheduled, short-answer in-class assignments. You should be ready to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort for this course. Your prior engagement in political science and political theory courses may be useful but is not essential or required.

Learning Objectives

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✓ To understand and be able critically to evaluate and argumentatively utilize concepts, key questions and main arguments presented in major texts of Western political theory.
✓ Learn to interpret political theory texts – their arguments, style, and different levels of meaning.
✓ To identify, evaluate and analyze competing ideas that determine the principles of existence and functioning of political communities and their different political forms
✓ To enrich theoretical understanding of concept of politics
Course Requirements

As a student registered for this class and receiving course credit, your responsibilities are:

✓ Attend all lectures.
✓ Arrive to lectures on time.
✓ Complete all readings by the assigned date and come to class prepared.
✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
✓ Bring assigned readings to class with you.
✓ Be an active listener during the lectures: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.

Required Books:

Reading and writing are essential tools and of crucial importance in theoretical academic work. Through reading we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different subjects of their studies in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts you should be able to deconstruct these arguments, critically evaluate and use the knowledge and understanding of them to formulate and develop your own ideas. There is a list of required books for this course. We will not read all of them in their entirety, but selected chapters and sections. Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard for your convenience. (These are marked “online” in a class schedule) When assignments include reading material placed online on a Blackboard, you should print them out, read them carefully and bring them to class with you. The required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as a bookstore as we want to make sure we are literally on the same pages of the text during the lectures and discussion sections. It is important you have the exact same editions as stated in this syllabus. If you order books from somewhere else, make sure you time your orders properly, so books arrive on time when you need them for the class and not later.


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## Course grade breakdown

- Midterm exam (midterm paper): 20%
- Final exam: (final research paper): 25%
- Two homework papers: 15% each (30% all together)
- Attendance and participation: 5%
- Discussion leads: 10%

## Discussion leads

Throughout the course, each of you will have an opportunity to “open up” a class session. You will present a very short summary of the reading assigned for a particular day (1-3 sentences) and will pose 3 questions related to the assigned reading, which we will use as a “guiding” points for a lecture and in-class discussion. Each of you will chose the day of a particular reading you want to open up the discussion for.

## Exams, homework papers and in class assignments

### Exams

Both, midterm and final exams are in the form of academic research paper. Your midterm paper should be of 6 pages long. Your final exam paper should be 9-10 pages long. Each paper should be of the following standard: Times Roman 12pt. font, double spaced with consistent citation/foot notes style through the paper and bibliography list.

### Homework

Your homework papers should be of the same format as exam papers but only 4-5 pages long. (not less than 4 pages)

### In-class assignments

These assignments will be in form hand written short answers (two-three paragraphs) to one or two questions pertaining to a reading material assigned for that day. These assignments will not be announced in advance so you have to make sure you are well prepared for each and every class.

### Blackboard and SUNY E-mail

A few readings may be placed on course’s Blackboard. Short homework assignments will also be posted on Blackboard in addition to being e-mailed to your “suny.edu” mailboxes. Make sure you check blackboard and your student e-mail regularly for course updates, changes in syllabus and other announcements.

### Office Hours:

You should not feel any hesitation to come see me to talk about the course material during my office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. in Humanities B16 office. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after or before class if you have time. If you cannot make the office hours, you should for a different meeting time by emailing me at least two days in advance.

### Lectures and in-class discussions

Lecture is a time for a professor to present the readings and unpack the arguments presented in texts at hand. However, I strongly value the benefits of a seminar type lectures. The form of intellectual dialogue is the most rewarding academic practice. I strongly encouraged you to actively participate in a dialogue about the material during the lecture. Feel free to interrupt me by raising your hand and asking questions. Feel free to engage in a discussion by presenting your arguments and respectfully responding to other students’ points of view.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites such as Sparknotes, Wikipedia and others and “reworking them” will also earn you an E along with further disciplinary actions. The
whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of your own and to demonstrate that you worked with the texts, understood them and, based on understanding and knowledge acquired, are able to develop your own argumentation. Any attempt to plagiarize in this course will be taken very, very seriously.

**Grade Appeals**
In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your TA or the professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.

**What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?**
Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holidays, travel, etc…) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible.

**Excused Absences**
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. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see: http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

**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). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.

**What can I do to succeed academically in this course?**
The Basics: Read, show up, participate, listen, take notes, ask questions
The most important factor for success is studying assigned readings, regular attendance of lectures, participation in class discussions, good academic writing and timely submission of homework.

**Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)**

**Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)**
Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm or contact them at 442-5180.
Course Outline

1) Aug. 28, Tuesday
- Syllabus and course overview

2) Aug. 30, Thursday
- Introductory discussion – what is political theory?

Cultural-Historical Context of Greek Political Thought from the Eight Century B.C.

3) Sept. 4, Tuesday
- Edit Hall, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks.*
  Introduction - “The Characteristics of the Ancient Greeks” (p.1-26)
  Chapter 2 - “The Creation of Greece” (p.51 – 72)
** If you interested, I recommend you also read chapter 1- “Seafaring Mycenaeans” (p.29-49)

4) Sept. 6, Thursday
- Edit Hall, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks.*
  Chapter 4 - “Inquiring Ionians” (p.101-127)
  Chapter 5 – “The Open Society of Athens” (p.127 – 159)

5) Sept. 11, Tuesday
- *The World of Athens*
  “An outline history of Athens to the death of Alexander the Great” (p. 1 – 57)

6) Sept. 13, Thursday
- *The World of Athens*
  “Gods and Festivals” (p.84 – 126)

7) Sept. 18, Tuesday
- *The World of Athens*
  “Human obligations, values and concerns” (p.127 -144)
  “Athenian Society” (p.146-198)

8) Sept. 20, Thursday
- Edit Hall, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks.*
  Chapter 6 - “Spartan Inscrutability” (p.159-179)

9) Sept. 25, Tuesday
*First homework paper announced*
- *The World of Athens*
  “Athenian democracy and imperialism.” (p.200 -247)
**If interested I recommend you read the following chapter “Athens at War.”

10) Sept. 27, Thursday
- Edit Hall, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks.*
  Chapter 9 - “Great Minds and Roman Power” (p.229-253)
  Chapter 10 - “Pagan Greeks and Christians” (p.253 – 277)
Ancient Greek Political Thought

Plato (428 – 347 B.C.)

1) Oct. 2, Tuesday
First homework paper due
- Read the summary of Book I in the Editor’s Synopsis (xlii)
- Plato. The Republic. Book II (p. 50 - 70) and Book III (p. 104 – 110)

2) Oct. 4, Thursday
- Plato. The Republic. and Book IV (P. 111 – 143)

3) Oct. 9, Tuesday
- Plato. The Republic. Book VIII (p. 252 – 284)

4) Oct. 11, Thursday
- Class discussion on Plato’s “Republic”

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.)

5) Oct. 16, Tuesday
- Aristotle, Politics, Book I (252a – 1253b) and Book III (1275a -1279b. From the beginning of book III to 1279b)

6) Oct. 18, Thursday
- Aristotle, Politics, Book III (1279b – 1288b. From 1279b to the end of book III.)

7) Oct. 23, Tuesday
Mid-term paper question announced
- Aristotle, Politics, Book IV (From the beginning of book IV to 1293b)

8) Oct. 25 Thursday
- Aristotle, Politics, Book V (From the beginning of book V to 1309a)

Roman Political Thought

Cicero

9) Oct. 30 Tuesday
Cicero, The Republic Book I (p.1-8; 19 – 33)

10) Nov. 1 Thursday
Mid-term paper due
- Cicero, The Republic, Book III (p.60 – 75) Book VI (p. 85-94)

11) Nov. 6 Tuesday

12) Nov. 8 Thursday
- Cicero, On Duties, Book I (p.1 – 18)

13) Nov. 13 Tuesday
Cicero, On Duties, Book I (p.18 -44)
Mediaeval Political Thought

24) Nov. 15 Thursday
   Second homework paper announced
   • Readings in Medieval Political Theory. John of Salisbury, (p.30 – 51)

25) Nov. 20, Tuesday
   • Readings in Medieval Political Theory. Tomas Aquinas, (p.97 – 116)

26) Nov. 27, Tuesday
   Second homework paper due
   • Readings in Medieval Political Theory. Tomas Aquinas, (p.119 - 130) and (p.133 – 136)

27) Nov. 29, Thursday
   • Readings in Medieval Political Theory. Marsiglio of Padua (p.174 – 188)

28) Dec. 4, Tuesday
   Final exam paper question announced
   • Readings in Medieval Political Theory. Marsiglio of Padua (p.188 - 199)

29) Dec 6, Thursday
   Last class session

   Final exam papers due hard copy handed to me personally at the same class location
   ON WEDNESDAY, DEC. 12, between 3:30pm – 5:30pm.