

**Political Science 301**  
**History of Political Thought I**  
**Ancient Greeks through Machiavelli**

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Office Hours: Tu Th 10:30-11:30 Hu 0B16 or by appt. Also downtown Milne 204, Tu 2-4.

Course Meets on Tu Th 11:45-1:05 in Ch 151

**Course Description and Objectives:**

This course will examine some of the central texts of the early and middle periods of Western political thought. The course starts with the ancient Greeks (Aeschylus, Thucydides, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) and their accounts of political community, justice, citizenship, virtue and the relation of political justice to political expediency. The course will then engage Roman political thought and its attempts to reconcile republicanism with empire through a reading of Cicero and then turn to Christian political thinking through an examination of the political theory of St. Augustine. Finally the class will close with an examination of the greatest of renaissance political theorists, Machiavelli. Machiavelli will raise for us the question of whether in fact a political actor seeking to acquire power over others can ever succeed and whether perhaps republics can do better. He, of course, also raises the question of what kind of political ethic might make sense in world in which we must acquire power over others whatever our goals and yet an unavoidable aspect of this world is a constant struggle between the people and few who want to rule. Throughout this course, a recurrent question will be, what do we mean by "politics," and what do different meanings of politics mean for our understanding of justice and political participation by citizens?

In process of reading these thinkers the course will aim at the following objectives:

- 1) to learn to understand political concepts and arguments conceived in a different context from ours.
- 2) to consider whether political ideas and arguments made in different historical contexts have something to say to our own political thinking and whether we will need to test whether our own political thinking about contemporary politics might be challenged by these earlier arguments.
- 3) to learn how to argue about politics by learning how some of the most acute political thinkers did so.
- 4) to learn how the style in which an author presents a political argument contributes to its political meaning.

### **Required Books:**

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. By R. Lattimore (Chicago)  
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* trans. by T. E. Wick (Modern Library)  
Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett)  
Plato, *The Republic* trans. by G. Grube and revised by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)  
Aristotle, *The Politics* trans. by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)  
Augustine, *The Political Ideas of St Augustine* (Hackett)  
Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago)  
Machiavelli, *The Discourses on The First Ten Books of Livy* (Chicago)

### **Course Outline**

#### I. An Introduction to Greek Political Concepts and Institutions

Get to know the meaning of the words polis (city-state), arete (virtue), dike (justice) [see handout]. Read Pericles's "Funeral Oration" in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 106-114.

#### II. Aeschylus, Justice as Vengeance and Justice as Harmony and Law–Kinship vs the Polis

Aeschylus, *Oresteia* (read all three plays: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, and the Eumenides)

#### III. Thucydides and the Crises of the Polis: Democracy, Leadership, Political Judgment, and Empire. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*

- a. pp. 1-130, (Causes of the war; Pericles speeches–Athens as democracy and Athens as tyranny, plague, revolutions, and inversion of morality)
- b. 154-202, (220-270 recommended but not required), 306-314 (par. 14-27) (Focus on Mytelenian debate).
- c. 349-378, 378-416 (through Par. 93), (focus on Melian Dialogue and Arguments for the Invasion of Syracuse).
- d. 449-481, 505-527 (Why is Athens defeated? Lessons about empire and democracy?) See handout with questions for speeches and events on which you should focus particular attention.

**Paper on Thucydides 5-6 pages due in the political science contact office, HU B16 by 10 am on Wednesday, October 6.**

#### IV. Socrates: The Philosopher and the Polis

Plato, *The Apology* and *Crito* in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

#### V. Plato: The Problem of Justice–Is our ordinary understanding of political justice true justice?

Plato, *The Republic* (entire)

- a. Book I and Book II until sec 363. (Ordinary concepts of justice: paying debts; helping friends and harming enemies; right of the stronger; power vs. right—what does it mean to rule well?; the story of the Gyges Ring.)
- Book II (Understanding justice as building most perfect polis in theory. Politics as forms of education. Political education and the need for fictions)
- b. Book III (Completing the education of the guardians and selecting rulers)
  
- Book IV\* (A new definition of justice. A new definition of happiness.) (Isomorphism of just city/polis and just soul—inseparability of just human being and just city)
- c. Book V (The completion of the kallipolis: communal ownership, the rule of philosophers, and the differences in genuine knowledge vs. opinion) (The superiority of theory to practice).
- d. Book VI\* (Justice as knowledge of the good and why only philosophers have access to it. Knowledge of forms vs. knowledge of appearances. ). Book VII\* (The double meaning of the allegory of the cave—political and philosophic. Is dialectic the only way to grasp justice? If justice can only be understood by philosophy can justice be “political”?)
- e. Finishing Plato: Book VIII (If justice requires the polity replicate the soul is justice as equal political membership indefensible? Why do polities decay?)

**Paper on Plato, 5-6 pages due in class on Tuesday November 2.**

VI. Aristotle: The Concept of Citizenship and the Problem of Human Excellence

Aristotle, *The Politics*, Bks. I, II, III, IV chs. 1-11 (recommended: V, chs. 1-9; VI; VII chs. 1-4, 9, 13)

Recommended: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bks., I, II, V., VI.

VII Roman political theory: Republicanism and Empire

Cicero, *On Commonwealth*, Book 2 (on e-reserve)

VII. Augustine: Christianity and Politics, The Two Cities.

St. Augustine, *Political Writings, City of God* 1-5, 11-14, Bks 18, 19, 22.

IX. Machiavelli: the Art of the State, Power, and Popular Republicanism

Machiavelli, *The Prince* entire

- a. Chs 1-14: the primordial problem of the prince—acquiring and maintaining lo stato; types of princes to imitate, prudential knowledge and virtù; founding, and military virtù.
- b. chs. 15-26: a new political ethic—virtue vs. virtù; reliance on advisers; the contradiction between Machiavelli’s promise of security and his claim that no one has so much virtù as to always adapt to fortune; fortune vs. virtù

Machiavelli, *The Discourses*,

- a. Bk. I chs, 1-4—popular disorder as order; how republics maintain la libertà in il vivere civile (maintaining liberty in a civic community); useful republican institutions; how to maintain the people as a political force and why they are wiser than a prince; beneficial and dangerous conflict between the few and the many.
- b. Bk. II (preface, chs. 1, 2, 3, 13, 30)—how Rome reconciles military virtù with republican liberty and its consequences; republic acting like princes.
- c. Bk. III (chs. 1\*, 3, 6\*, 9\*)—rejuvenation of a republic via shock to first principles; why republics have more virtù than a prince; how to avoid conspiracies.

**Final Exam December 13, 3:30-5:30 pm.**

### **Course Requirements**

1. You will be expected to have the reading done before each class.
2. There will be a 5-6 page analytic paper on Thucydides due on **Wednesday October; 5-6** page, and analytic paper on Plato due on **Tuesday November 2<sup>nd</sup>**, and a final exam whose format is yet to be determined.
3. On short notice I may ask you to write me a one page essay to test your understanding of the reading and provoke discussion. These will be response papers and cannot be made up.
4. **Your attendance in this course is required.** At least once a week if not more, I will hand out an attendance sheet. Should I find that you have missed more than three classes over the semester without a valid excuse, your grade will drop by a one half and will continue to drop the same amount for each missed session.

### **Grading**

The two papers will count 25% a piece, and the final will each count for 30 % of the grade. 20% of the grade will consist of response papers and participation. I generally make allowances for improvement.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Should I find that you have cheated on an exam or plagiarized a piece of written work, you will immediately fail the course and your case will be handed on to a university committee.

### **E-Reserve and Blackboard**

I will be putting some of our readings on e-reserve, and, if I can get it up and running, will try to use Blackboard for response papers as well as provide questions to help you with the reading. The password will be: pos301 once I get everything set up.

### **This course fulfills the General Education requirement in the category of Europe.**

It focuses on the development and distinctive features of the institutions, economies, societies, and cultures of Europe. It offers an historical approach to European thought as well as an account of the narratives and texts whereby European cultures have come to gain their specific identity. It relates political thought to the larger issues in the history and cultural development of Europe.

## Suggested Reading

### **The Nature of Political Theory**

Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (ch. 1)

Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future

The Human Condition

J.G. Gunnell, Political Theory and Tradition

Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Science of Man" and "Political Theory and Political Practice" in Philosophy and the Human Sciences

Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy

A. Quinton (ed.), Political Philosophy

Michael Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics

J.G.A. Pocock, Politics, Language, and Time

Thomas Spragens, Understanding Political Theory

### **Greek Political Concepts and Culture**

A.W.H Adkins, Merit and Responsibility

Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece

M.I. Finley, The Ancient Greeks

Democracy, Ancient and Modern

Politics in 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

From Solon to Socrates

Eric Havelock, The Liberal Temper of Greek Politics

The Greek Concept of Justice

A.H.M Jones, Athenian Democracy

W.G. Forrest, The Emergence of Greek Democracy

H.D.F. Kitto, The Greeks

Werner Jaeger, Paideia (especially Vol. I)

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. Zimmern, The Greek Commonwealth

A. Andrews, The Greek Tyrants

Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness

### **Thucydides**

A.W. H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility

Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece

F.M. Cornford, Thucydides: Mythhistoricus

David Grene, Greek Political Theory

C.N. Cochrane, Thucydides and the Science of History

J.B. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians

M. Finley, The Greek Historians

W.R. Conner, Thucydides

Donald Kagen, The Peloponnesian War

Jonathan Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*

Gregory Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity*

### **Plato and Socrates**

Plato, The Laws

The Statesman

E. Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle

G.M.A. Grube, Plato's Political Thought

Eric Havelock, Preface to Plato

Paul Friedlander, Plato: An Introduction

Werner Jaeger, Paideia (vol.II, pp. 198-365; vol. III, pp. 213- 262)

Alvin Gouldner, Enter Plato

A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and his Work

Susan Okin, Women in Western Political Thought (chapt on Plato)

Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (chs. III-IV)

Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies

Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (chapt. 2)

W.K.C. Guthrie, Socrates

The Sophists

Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State

### **Aristotle**

A.W.H Adkins, Merit and Responsibility (chs. 15-16)

E. Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle

G.H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (chs. 5-7)

J. Mulligan, Aristotle's Political Theory

Leo Strauss, The City and Man

Natural Right and History

J.H. Cooper, Reason and Human Good in Aristotle

W.F.R Hardie, Aristotle's Ethical Theory

A. Rorty (ed.), Essays in Aristotle's Ethics

W.D. Ross, Aristotle

Susan Okin, Women in Western Political Thought (chapter on Aristotle)

Curtis Johnson, Aristotle's Theory of the State

### **Christian and Medieval Political Theory**

C.N. Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture

Rudolf Bultman, Primitive Christianity

Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (ch. 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 Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Ages

Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History

Walter Ullman, Medieval Political Thought

R. Lerner (ed.), Medieval Political Philosophy

## **Machiavelli**

Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (ch. 7)

Quentin Skinner, Machiavelli

The Foundations of Modern Political Thought I (chs. 5-6)

"Machiavelli and the Maintenance of Liberty" Politics, No. 18, 1983

"The Idea of Negative Liberty" in J.B. Schneewind, Quentin Skinner eds. Philosophy in History

J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment

F. Meinicke, Machiavellism

Isaiah Berlin, "The Question of Machiavelli" in Against the Current

G. Sabine, History of Political Theory (ch. 17)

Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (chs. 10-12)

Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli

Antonio Gramsci, "The Modern Prince" in Selections from Prison Notebooks

Felix Gilbert, Machiavelli and Guicciardini

Mark Hulliung, Citizen Machiavelli

F. Chabod, Machiavelli and the Renaissance

Charles Singleton, "The Perspective of Art," Kenyon Review, Vol. XV (1953).

M. Merleau-Pony, "A Note on Machiavelli" in Signs

J.W. Whitfield, Machiavelli

Eugene Garver, Machiavelli and the History of Prudence

Michael McCanles, Machiavelli Discourse of il Principe

Thomas Greene, "The End of Discourse in Machiavelli's 'Prince,'" Yale French Studies 67 (1984): 64-65.