

## **Introduction to Political Philosophy**

GO 102, Spring 2011  
Skidmore College

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*Note: I do not check phone messages and e-mail on weekends.*

Office hours: MW 3:30-4:30 (*often* avail. MWF 11:30-3:00), T, 11:15-12:15 & 1:30-2:30

This course is an introductory survey of political philosophy organized around classic works by Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Tocqueville. It is a typical survey in that sense, but several features of the course are unique. First, it introduces the situation of the ancient city-state by means of a Shakespeare drama, *Coriolanus*; this play gives us a fuller and more vivid picture of the problems Aristotle attempts to deal with in his *Politics*.

Second, it examines the interchange between Biblical religion (particularly Christian religion) and political philosophy in a broader manner than usual. While we do make a survey-level examination of Augustine and Aquinas, we also pay particular attention to Biblical texts, and to how Christianity influenced politics in specific contexts, such as in Puritan New England and Medieval Catholic Europe.

Third, the course stresses the difference between the classical and modern modes of political philosophy by means of considering some of Locke's "Aristotelian" critics. In this way the usual debate that introductory courses present between the modern radicalism of Rousseau and the modern liberalism of Locke is supplemented by an older debate between pre-modern republicanism and modern liberalism. As we shall see, a certain set of neither-right-nor-left (but not moderate) thinkers sometimes known as "Porchers" are insisting that this older debate is actually the key to our contemporary discontents.

Modern liberalism gave birth to liberal democracy and to corporate capitalism, both of which decisively shape our lives today. Marx and Tocqueville, each in his own way, attempted to explain the truly new world of liberal modernity better than liberalism itself could. But whereas Marx sought to speed (what he regarded as) modern society's inevitable and desirable overthrow, Tocqueville sought to protect it from (what he regarded as) its own worst tendencies. Our course thus concludes by examining their thought, with an emphasis upon Tocqueville, the "critical friend" of modern democracy (and America) *par excellence*.

Throughout this course, we consider perennial issues: how to adjudicate the competing claims of the poor and the rich, what regime is best for mankind, and whether there are natural principles which ought to govern all politics. The course thus causes us to grapple with some key political ideas in their most fundamental formulations, giving us a far more expansive understanding of political thought than that provided by the cramped "liberal vs. conservative" schema. It also prods us to consider how our personal convictions, even those that seem unrelated to politics, might actually be quite shaped by the modern liberal-democratic regime we live in.

This course serves as the foundation for all upper level courses in political philosophy.

**Texts:**

- William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* --any non-paraphrased version acceptable  
 Aristotle, *The Politics* --the Lord translation required  
 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* -- any non-paraphrased version acceptable  
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse* -- Masters & Masters translation required  
 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* -- edition with the Martin Malia introduction required  
 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* --Mansfield & Winthrop translation required  
 Harvey Mansfield, *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* --required  
 Readings Packet (Bible, Augustine, Aquinas, McWilliams, etc.) --required, distributed in class  
 Film, *Quo Vadis* --on reserve, viewing required by 10/6

Cheryl Glenn and Loretta Gray, *The Hodges Harbrace Handbook, 17<sup>th</sup> edition* -- Gvmnt. majors must purchase. Others might consider purchasing it since my marks on papers, in conjunction with the Government Department *Writing Requirement* pamphlet, may refer to it; at least one copy will be on reserve in the library, and another may be available at my office or the Gvmnt. Dept. office

**SCHEDULE:** Shorter reading assignments are usually short because they require more careful study than most. Each reading must be completed by the date it is listed. If there are several readings for a single class, read them in the order indicated.

**Part One: The Polis and Classical Political Philosophy**

- 1) 1/24 Introduction to Class; Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Act I, sc.1
- 2) 1/26 *Coriolanus*, Act I, sc. 2 – Act II, sc. 2
- 3) 1/28 *Coriolanus*, Acts II-III
  
- 4) 1/31 *Coriolanus*, finish entire
- 5) 2/2 *Coriolanus*, re-read Acts IV-V
- 6) 2/4 Aristotle, *Politics I* 1-2, III 9, II 1-3, 5 through 1264a10; Ed.'s intro 1-8, 25-26
  
- 7) 2/7 *Politics III* 1-5
- 8) 2/9 *Politics III* 6-13
- 9) 2/11 *Politics III* 14-18
  
- 10) 2/14 *Politics IV*, 1-2, 7-9, 11-12 VI, 2; Ed.'s intro 8-22 and analysis 27-29
- 11) 2/16 *Politics VII*, 1-3; Mansfield, *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* 1-22
- 12) 2/18 I'm out of town, but a take-home essay test will be sent via email Thursday--all tests must be placed in my 306A box by 3pm. Friday.

**Part Two: Biblical Religion and Political Thought**

- 13) 2/21 *Genesis* 1-5
- 14) 2/23 *Genesis* 6-22
- 15) 2/25 Christian Moral and Political Teachings:  
*Matthew* 5-7, *Mark* 12:13-17, *Luke* 10:25-37, *Acts* 1-2, 4-5:11, *Romans* 12-13, *Colossians* 3-4:6, *1 Peter*, entire  
 Film Assignment: view *Quo Vadis*, on reserve at library

- 16) 2/28 Ernest Fortin, “The Political Thought of St. Augustine”; Augustine, *City of God*, book XV, sections 1-2, 4-5
- 17) 3/2 Aquinas excerpts, p. 357-374(i.e., up through “Obligation of Human Law”) Mansfield 22-29
- 18) 3/4 Aquinas excerpts, remainder; John Winthrop, “On Liberty”; Tocqueville on the Puritans, *Democracy in America*, 27-44
- 19) 3/7 Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”

**Part Three: Natural Rights Liberalism, and Its Aristotelian Critics**

- 20) 3/9 Machiavelli and the Modern Turn  
Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, selections  
Pierre Manent, “Europe and the Theologico-Political Problem” and “Machiavelli and the Fecundity of Evil” (1-19 of *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*)
- 21) 3/11 Early Modern Political Philosophy: from Machiavelli to Hobbes to Locke  
Mansfield, 29-43  
Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 123-140

Break

- 22) 3/21 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 1-21, 25-51, 54-61
- 23) 3/23 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 86-90, 123-148, 159-168  
FIRST PAPER DUE
- 24) 3/25 Practical Blessings of Natural Rights Liberalism:  
Thomas West, excerpts from *Vindicating the Founders*  
Anne Phillips, excerpts from *Democracy and Difference*
- 25) Extra Class to be scheduled—19<sup>th</sup>-century Aristotelian objections:  
John Calhoun, “Speech on the Oregon Bill,”  
François Guizot, quotations
- 26) 3/28 Contemporary Aristotelian objections I:  
Wilson Carey McWilliams, “Democracy and the Citizen” 79-91
- 27) 3/30 Contemporary Aristotelian objections II:  
McWilliams, “Democracy and the Citizen” 91-101  
Patrick Deneen, “Virtue, Technology, and Wendell Berry” 1-9  
“The Alternative Tradition in America,” pt. 1

4/1 April Fools Day—no class (seriously! I’m at a conference)

**Part Four: Two Radical Responses to Liberal Modernity: Rousseau and Marx**

- 28) 4/4 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 75-76, 91-119, skipping notes

- 29) 4/6 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 119-141
- 30) 4/8 re-read 91-141, this time reading notes
  
- 31) 4/11 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 141-181, w/notes
- 32) 4/13 Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, I-II
- 33) 4/15 Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, III-IV; excerpts, Raymond Aron
  
- 34) 4/18 Martin Malia introduction; Michael Harrington

**Part Five: Tocqueville’s Response to Liberal Modernity**

<i>Democracy in America</i>	(main topics)
35) 4/20 3-15, 45-55, 530-532	Introduction, Democratic Social State; Dogma of Popular Sovereignty
36) 4/22 55-65, 82-90 187-192, 220-235	Townships; “The Corollary,” Decentralization Good News, Bad News on Amer. Dmcy.
37) 4/25 239-245, 248-250, 403-416, 433-439	Tyranny of the Majority; The Democratic Mind;
38) 4/27 416-428, 469-472 479-492, 500-506	Religion; Perfectability; History Liberty and Individualism; Associations
39) 4/29 506-524, 599-604 563-576	Acquisitiveness and Restlessness; Ambition Gender Issues and Sexual Morays
40) 5/2 639-645, 661-676	Towards Soft Despotism; the Defense of Liberty

2nd PAPER DUE, Monday, 5/9 (hand-in at my office, same time as class)

Final Exam—Thursday 5/12, same room, i.e, Ladd 307. Seniors will take earlier—see me.

**Grading:** 10% Participation, 5% Quizzes, 10% Test, 45% 2 Essays, 30% Final Exam.

**Final Exam:** This will be a comprehensive and mostly essay exam. Please do not ask me to reschedule it unless it conflicts with another final or you have some other Skidmore-approved emergency reason.

**Essays:** 20% for first, 25% for second. These are formal essays where you are expected to have an identifiable thesis with arguments to support it. They should demonstrate a command of the text at hand, and a thoughtfulness about the claims made therein. I will hand out topics approximately two weeks before the essays are due. These are not research papers and you are not required to read any secondary literature. I want you to engage these authors directly.

Writing that is unacceptable for college-level work will receive a failing grade *regardless* of the quality of the ideas. This means that only a miniscule amount of grammar errors, careless errors, and format errors are permitted, and that each one harms your grade to some extent—consult p. 5 of the *The Writing Requirement in the Government Dept.* pamphlet for grading guidelines.

An essay may be handed in the next session or 48 hours later precisely for the loss of 6% of the grade. Nothing is accepted later. Being more than 3 minutes late on due-dates will not only be counted as a tardy, but will get you this same 6% deduction. E-MAILED WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Not handing in a paper “awards” you 40% rather than 0% of the percentage points so that your final grade would not be entirely doomed.

**Take-Home Test:** Treat this as an in-class essay exam, except that it is a) open book, b) typed, and c) grammar and punctuation errors will be more strictly monitored and penalized than the typical essay exam. It will consist of two essays, and perhaps one or two short answers. You should plan on spending one to two hours doing the exam, and at least a half-hour re-reading, editing, and checking for errors. No more than seven double-spaced pages will be accepted. Group study prior to the exam is allowed, but aiding one another in any way once the exam begins is cheating. Use no outside resources.

**Participation:** Good participation means you contribute fairly regularly to the quality of class time. This can occur in a number of ways: giving good responses to my discussion questions, asking myself or one of your peers for clarification when needed, (politely) arguing against myself or one of your peers, asking useful questions, or even refraining from jumping in when others have established a useful line of conversation that you can add nothing significant to. The participation grade can also reflect your demeanor. For example, the always-silent-but-noticeably-attentive student will receive a C-. The always-silent-but-seemingly-disengaged student will receive an F. The grade is *not* aided by repeatedly participating without evidence of careful thought or without consideration of the good of the class.

Quieter students may wish to meet with me in office hours and provide evidence (outlines) that they are doing the assignments. There may be outside lecture events that likewise allow the participation grade to be improved.

**Reading in Class:** Reading certain key portions of text aloud will be an important part of our class—it can make a huge difference to the quality of class time if you read with volume, spirit, intelligence, and clear pronunciation. Volunteering to read aloud, and then doing so well, will help you participation grade. If you wish to never read aloud in class, let me know. The purpose of such reading is generally to allow us, as a class, to effectively analyze key portions of text.

**Quizzes:** There will be a handful of written quizzes, generally by surprise, and occurring at the beginning of class. No make-ups, so absences and tardies hurt doubly here. There will also be several quiz sessions, in which 3-5 students will be chosen at random to answer a simply factual question and/or a more conceptual question about the assignment. I will increase both the number of quizzes and their grade value if I judge the class is not adequately preparing.

**General Expectations:**

*You are expected to read the assignments carefully and reflectively, remaining open to the possibility that what you are reading is right. Your first duty as an attentive reader is to understand what is being said. This means grasping the argument of the author—identifying central claims and seeing how these claims are supported. When you encounter something you strongly disagree with, make sure you first understand the argument. You are expected to give reasons for your opinions.*

**Commonsense Rules:**

You will be attentive in class and display the demeanor of one who is interested in the material and respectful of others.

Cell-phones or similar items, food, gum, tobacco products, make-up, and other personal items will not be on your desk, nor in use—remember to turn cell phones off. *It is extremely rude to “text” or otherwise consult electronic devices during class—you will be asked to leave class if you insult all of us by doing so.*

Refrain from going to the restroom or the water-fountain during class, with only emergencies providing exceptions.

**Four Non-Commonsense Rules:**

1) Laptop computers and recording devices are not to be used in class. Exceptions are made according to Skidmore policy.

2) Hats and hoods are not to be worn in class.

3) Regular (non-alcoholic, obviously!) beverages may be brought to class.

4) I will be utilizing formal address, i.e., “Mr. Smith,” etc., for class purposes. If you refer to another student in class discussion, you will do likewise—e.g., “Contrary to what Mr. Smith said, I noticed that on page five of the reading...etc.” You will refer to me as “Professor Scott” or “Dr. Scott.”

**Attendance:**

*Attendance is mandatory.* All excused absences must be cleared ahead of time. If you must miss class, you remain responsible for all the material covered that day. After three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will bring your final grade down by 5%. Except in extraordinary circumstances, once you rack up more than four absences of any sort, including excused absences, your final grade will be penalized 3% for each subsequent absence. It will obviously be penalized more if many of these are unexcused. Two egregious tardies count as an unexcused absence.

**Academic Honor:**

I take violations of the honor code very seriously. At minimum, plagiarism will merit a “0” for that assignment, with failure for the course likely. In cases that I deem particularly egregious, I will seek to have you suspended or expelled from Skidmore College.

Reprinted below is the section on academic integrity violations from the Student Handbook.

The Skidmore pamphlet on "The Ethics of Scholarship" defines some of the positive reasons why an academic community needs to observe the highest principles of intellectual honesty. These expectations include the bond of trust among faculty and students, without which there can be no truly educational enterprise; the need for students to embrace the rewarding struggles inherent in challenging intellectual endeavors; the excitement of mastering research and discovery processes in various disciplines; and the rewards of becoming a genuine participant in the larger community of scholars past and present. The academic Honor Code requires students to attend closely to such issues as the following:

1. Plagiarism is representing the work of another person as one's own: for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources; the appropriate ways of acknowledging his or her academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness; and the consequences for violating the Skidmore Honor Code. The Integrity Board and the Board of Appeals will not regard claims of ignorance, unintentional error, or academic or personal pressures as adequate defenses for violations of the Honor Code. a. Minor plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a few phrases, sentences, or an idea (though not an idea of importance to the thesis or central purpose of the paper or project). b. More serious plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the quotation or paraphrase of a few longer, paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) of important pieces of evidence or information; or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper's or project's structure. c. Major plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method submitted as one's own; and work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.

2. Cheating on examinations by giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination. Examples of unauthorized help include collaboration of any sort during an examination (unless specifically approved by the instructor); collaboration before an examination (when such collaboration is specifically forbidden by the instructor); the use of notes, books, or other aids during an exam (unless explicitly permitted by the instructor); looking upon someone else's exam during the examination period; intentionally allowing another student to look upon one's own exam; discussing test items during the exam period; and the passing of any exam information to students who have not yet taken the examination. There can be no conversation while an examination is in progress. Any prohibited or unauthorized interaction (e.g., talking or

other communication) between students while an examination is in progress may constitute "cheating," regardless of the content or intent of the interaction.

3. Multiple submission of substantial portions of the same work for credit, without the prior explicit consent of the instructor(s) to whom the material is being (or has been) submitted.
4. Forging another person's signature or name on academic or other official documents (e.g., the signing of a faculty advisor approval, the misuse of attendance sign-up sheets, the mishandling or misappropriation of registration materials or other official documents).
5. The deliberate destruction, damaging, or theft of another's work or working materials (including lab experiments, computer programs, term papers, works of art, or other projects undertaken for academic purposes).
6. The effort to remove uncharged library materials from the library, defacing or damaging library materials, intentional displacement and hoarding of materials within the library for unauthorized private use, and the abuse of reserve-book privileges. These and related offenses constitute an abuse of the College community's central resource for the advancement of learning. The College may treat the failure to return materials to the library in a timely fashion, when other members of the Skidmore community need these materials, as an academic integrity infraction.
7. Computer abuse and fraud includes the abuses defined in these guidelines under "plagiarism," "multiple submission," and "alteration." The College expects members of the Skidmore community to observe the highest standards of academic and social integrity as they use computers for class, office, and individual projects. Such offenses as computer plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, entry into another person's computing directory, data theft or unauthorized alteration, inappropriate use of the electronic mail, and other malicious or dishonest computer activities will be treated as serious infringements of integrity. Consult the "Code of Ethics for Academic Computing at Skidmore College." The College recognizes the following EDUCOM policy statement:

Respect for intellectual labor and creativity is vital to academic discourse and enterprise. This principle applies to works of all authors and publishers in all media. It encompasses respect for the right to acknowledgment; the right to privacy; and the right to determine the form, manner, and terms of publication and distribution. Because electronic information is volatile and easily reproduced, respect for the work is especially critical in computer environments. Violations of authorial integrity, including plagiarism, invasion of privacy, unauthorized access, and trade secret and copyright violations, may be grounds for sanctions against members of the academic community.

