

Introduction to Political Philosophy (Government 102)

Skidmore College

Fall 2008

MW 2:30-4:20 p.m., Ladd 207

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Office Hours: Mon. and Fri., 10-11 a.m.,
or by appointment

This course is an introduction to political philosophy. It will consist of a close reading of texts written by the most influential and penetrating political thinkers of the ancient, medieval, and modern world. We seek to find, through these texts, comprehensive and consistent answers to the question of human happiness and its relation to political life, justice, friendship, obligation, regimes, political and moral virtue or excellence, science, and religious faith. Confronting thinkers from classical antiquity through the twentieth century, we will examine the abiding questions that have guided political philosophers, and their radically different answers to those questions. This course serves as the foundation for all upper level courses in political philosophy. Students will learn how to read various texts carefully, to think, and to write well.

I. Required Texts, available at the Skidmore Shop:

Aristotle (C. Lord, ed.) *The Politics* (Chicago)

Augustine, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis* (Harlan Davidson), Jerry Weinberger, ed.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett), Edwin Curley, ed.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harvey C. Mansfield, translator

Plato and Aristophanes (West & West, eds.), *Four Texts On Socrates* (Cornell)

Plato (Bloom, ed.), *The Republic* (Basic Books)

II. Course Requirements

Attendance requirements: all absences must be excused by a doctor's note or relative's obituary.

Two short essays (4 typed pages), due October 1, November 5.

One longer essay (5 typed pages), due December 3.

Final comprehensive (essay) exam, as scheduled. (Exam study questions will be distributed on December 10.)

III. Class Schedule

Wednesday, September 3

Introduction to Course

A. Classical Political Philosophy

Friday, September 5

Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*
Four Texts on Socrates, 63-97

Monday, September 8

The Apology of Socrates (cont'd)

Wednesday, September 10	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I (Cephalus), 327a-331e1
Friday, September 12	<i>Republic</i> , Book I (Polemarchus and Thrasymachus), 331e1-354c.
Monday, September 15	<i>Republic</i> (cont'd)
Wednesday, September 17	<i>Republic</i> , Book II (Glaucón's and Adeimantus' demands of justice), 357a-368c
Friday, September 19	Aristotle, <i>The Politics</i> , Book I, chs. 1 & 2
Monday, September 22	<i>The Politics</i> , Book I, chs. 3-13
Wednesday, September 24	<i>The Politics</i> , Book II, chs. 7 and 8
Friday, September 26	<i>The Politics</i> , Book III, chs. 1-9
Monday, September 29	<i>The Politics</i> , Book III, chs. 10-18
Wednesday, October 1	Review/Catch-up/Conclusion First Paper Due

B. Political Philosophy and Divine Revelation

Friday, October 3	Genesis, chs. 1-19
Monday, October 6	Genesis, chs. 20-50
Wednesday, October 8	Exodus; I Samuel 16-17, 2 Samuel 5-12
Friday, October 10	The <i>New Testament</i> : Matthew 5-7; Luke 10:25-37; Letter of Paul to the Romans, ch. 13
Monday, October 13	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XIV,
Wednesday, October 15	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XIX
Friday, October 17	Augustine, Letters 91 and 138; Reply to Faustus the Manichean, XXII, 73-79
Monday, October 20	Thomas Aquinas, "The Treatise on Law" (<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I-II, QQ. 90-100)

C. The Modern Turn

Wednesday, October 22	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 1-5
Friday, October 24	Study Day; no class
Monday, October 27	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , ch. 6
Wednesday, October 29	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 7-14
Friday, October 31	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 15 and 16
Monday, November 3	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 17 and 18

Wednesday, November 5	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 19-26; Second Paper Due
Friday, November 7	Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> , 35-60
Monday, November 10	Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> , 60-83
Wednesday, November 12	Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> (cont'd)
Friday, November 14	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 6, 10, 13
Monday, November 17	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 14-19
Wednesday, November 19	Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients and the Moderns"
D. The Radical Critique	
Friday, November 21	Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>
Wednesday, November 26	Thanksgiving Break; no classes
Friday, November 28	Thanksgiving Break; no classes
Monday, December 1	Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (cont'd)
Wednesday, December 3	Marx, "On the Jewish Question"; Third Paper Due
Friday, December 5	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Prologue
Monday, December 8	Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart"
Wednesday, December 10	Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism" Study Questions for Final Exam Distributed
Thursday, December 18	1:30-4:30 Final Exam