

Introduction to Political Philosophy (Government 102)

Skidmore College

Fall 2011

MWF 11:15-12:10, Ladd 307

Timothy Burns

Office: Ladd 316; phone: 580-5247

Office Hours: MWF 2-3
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 Government Department courses in political philosophy. Students will learn how to read various texts carefully, to think, and to write well.

Note: This course does not fulfill any requirements in the Philosophy Department.

I. Required Texts, available at the Skidmore Shop:

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

Augustine, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

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

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

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harvey C. Mansfield, translator (University of Chicago Press)

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

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

The Hodges Harbrace Handbook, Seventeenth Edition

II. Course Requirements

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

Three essays (4-5 typed pages), due October 5, November 2, and December 2.

Final comprehensive (essay) exam, December 19. (Exam study questions will be distributed on December 7.)

III. Class Schedule

Wednesday, September 7

Introduction to the Course

A. Classical Political Philosophy

Friday, September 9

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

Monday, September 12	<i>The Apology of Socrates</i> (cont'd)
Wednesday, September 14	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I (Cephalus), 327a-331e1
Friday, September 16	<i>Republic</i> , Book I (Polemarchus and Thrasymachus), 331e1-354c.
Monday, September 19	<i>Republic</i> (cont'd)
Wednesday, September 21	<i>Republic</i> , Book II (Glaucón's and Adeimantus' demands of justice), 357a-368c
Friday, September 23	Aristotle, <i>The Politics</i> , Book I, chs. 1 & 2
Monday, September 26	<i>The Politics</i> , Book I, chs. 3-13
Wednesday, September 28	<i>The Politics</i> , Book II, chs. 7 and 8
Friday, September 30	<i>The Politics</i> , Book III, chs. 1-9
Monday, October 3	<i>The Politics</i> , Book III, chs. 10-18
Wednesday, October 5	Review/Catch-up/Conclusion First Paper Due

B. Political Philosophy and Divine Revelation

Friday, October 7	Genesis, chs. 1-19
Monday, October 10	Genesis, chs. 20-50
Wednesday, October 12	Exodus; 1 Samuel 16-17, 2 Samuel 5-12
Friday, October 14	The <i>New Testament</i> : Matthew 5-7; Luke 10:25-37; Letter of Paul to the Romans, ch. 13
Monday, October 17	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XIV,
Wednesday, October 19	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XIX
Friday, October 21	Study Day—No Classes
Monday, October 24	Augustine, Letters 91 and 138; Reply to Faustus the Manichean, XXII, 73-79
Wednesday, October 26	Thomas Aquinas, "The Treatise on Law" (<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I-II, QQ. 90-100)

C. The Modern Turn

Friday, October 28	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 1-5
Monday, October 31	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , ch. 6
Wednesday, November 2	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 7-14 Second Paper Due
Friday, November 4	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 15, 16, 17
Monday, November 7	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 18-26
Wednesday, November 9	Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> , 35-60
Friday, November 11	Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> , 60-83
Monday, November 14	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 6, 10, 13
Wednesday, November 16	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 14-19
Friday, November 18	No Class.
Monday, November 21	Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients and the Moderns"
D. The Radical Critiques	
Wednesday, November 23	Thanksgiving Break; no classes
Friday, November 25	Thanksgiving Break; no classes
Monday, November 28	Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>
Wednesday, November 30	Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (cont'd)
Friday, December 2	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Prologue Third Paper Due
Monday, December 5	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Prologue
Wednesday, December 7	Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism"
Friday, December 9	Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart" Study Questions for Final Exam Distributed
Monday, December 19	1:30-4:30 p.m. Final Exam