

## Introduction to Political Philosophy

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GO 102, Spring 2009  
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### Course Description:

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.

### Required Texts:

Aristotle, *The Politics*, C. Lord trans. (Chicago)  
Augustine, *Political Writings*, M. Tkacz and D. Kries trans. (Hackett)  
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, E. Curley ed. (Hackett)  
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, H. Mansfield trans. (Chicago)  
Herman Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Stories* (Penguin Classics)  
Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts On Socrates*, T. West and G. West trans. (Cornell)  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings*, V. Gourevitch trans. (Cambridge)  
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, H. Mansfield and D. Winthrop trans. (Chicago)

### Course Outline:

Introduction to the course (1/21)

### I. Classical Political Philosophy

#### A. Plato

- *Apology* (1/23)
- *Apology* (1/28)
- *Crito* (1/30)

#### B. Aristotle

- *Politics*, I.1-2 (2/4)
- *Politics*, III.1-9 (2/6)
- *Politics*, III.10-18 (2/11)

### II. Political Philosophy and Divine Revelation

#### A. Old Testament

- Genesis 1-5 (2/13)
- Genesis 5-11 (2/18)

#### B. New Testament

- Matthew 1-7; Luke 10:25-37 (2/20)
  - Letters of Paul to the Romans 12:4 & 9:30; Galatians 3; Ephesians 3:1-6 (2/20)
- C. Augustine
- *City of God*, Book XIV (2/25)
  - *City of God*, Book XIX; Letters 91, 138 (2/27)

### III. The Modern Turn

#### A. Machiavelli

- *The Prince*, chs. 1-14 (3/4)
- *The Prince*, chs. 15-26 (3/6)

### SPRING BREAK, MARCH 7-15

#### B. Hobbes

- *Leviathan*, Intro., chs. 6, 13-14 (3/18)
- *Leviathan*, chs. 17-18, 21, 29 (3/20)
- *Leviathan*, chs. 46, 48 (3/25)

#### C. Locke and the Declaration of Independence

- *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-5 (3/27)
- Declaration (3/27)

### IV. The Radical Critique

#### A. Rousseau

- *Second Discourse*, Dedication, Preface, Part I (4/1)
- *Second Discourse* Part I (cont.) (4/3)
- *Second Discourse* Part II (4/8)

### Interlude on Law, Ambition, and Perpetuation

#### A. Abraham Lincoln

- *Lyceum Address* (4/10)

#### B. James Madison

- *The Federalist* No. 49 (4/10)

#### C. David Hume

- “Of the Origin of Government” (4/10)

#### D. Herman Melville

- *Billy Budd, Sailor*, chs. 1-17 (4/15)
- *Billy Budd, Sailor*, chs. 18-end (4/17).

### V. Sympathetic Critique

#### A. Tocqueville

- *Democracy in America*, Intro., Vol. II., Part i, chs. 1-3, 7-8, 20; Part ii, chs. 1-2 (4/22)
- *Democracy in America*, Vol. II., Part iii, chs. 1-2, 4-5, 18 (4/24)
- *Democracy in America*, Vol. II., Part iv, chs. 1-3, 6-8 (4/29)

## **Course Requirements:**

Reflection Papers & quizzes, 10%

Essay #1, 25%

Essay #2, 30%

Final Exam, 35%

### *Reflection Papers:*

In an attentive reader, the act of reading evokes a response. A response can take many different forms. Some readers underline key passages. Some write comments in the margins. Some take notes on a separate sheet of paper. All of these are ways of carrying forward your inquiries. In this course I will be asking you to pursue yet another method: reflection papers. These short papers (two pages) are an extension and heightening of the more casual and distracted responses which you may now give to the things you read.

In preparation for class, you should commit to paper your thoughts about the text (or a portion of the text) and the questions that arise from it. This should be more than some scratchy, abbreviated notes intelligible only to you; however, this is not a polished essay. You have the leisure to explore, inquire, question, and wander. By wandering, I do not mean aimless wandering. Since our discussions in class will be guided always by two questions, your reflection papers should be so guided: what is the author saying? Is it true? Sometimes it will take all of your effort to figure out what the author means. Other times you will want to take a step back and evaluate the claims made in the text. These are distinct questions, but in pursuing one, the other should always be kept silently in mind.

### *Essays:*

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.

### *Final Exam:*

This will be a comprehensive, essay exam taken during the exam period.

### *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 the 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.

You will be attentive in class and always display the demeanor of one who is interested in the material and respectful of others. You will take your share of responsibility for the quality of class time, coming prepared to discuss the assignments thoughtfully.

### *Attendance:*

Attendance is mandatory. There is no such thing as an unexcused absence. All absences must therefore be cleared ahead of time. If you must miss class, you remain responsible for all the

material covered that day. After one unexcused absence, each subsequent absence will bring your final grade down by one half of a letter grade. After four absences, I will require you to withdraw from the course.