

Political Science 361
Oregon State University
Fall 2007
Wed. & Fri., 12-1:50
206 Milam Hall

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Classical Political Thought

This is a course on ancient, medieval, and Renaissance political theory, tracing the development of Western political thought from Ancient Greece (fifth century B.C.) to the Renaissance Italy (16th century). We focus on the canon of political theory from these periods--the main works that have been historically influential as well as being of intrinsic philosophical interest. We will focus on a small number of thinkers and will use primary texts. We begin with the two towering figures of ancient political thought, Plato and Aristotle, and will spend more than half of the term on their most important political works, *The Republic* and *The Politics*, respectively. We then move to the waning days of the Roman Empire, and examine St. Augustine's attempts to reconcile Christianity with the requirements of worldly authority. After this, we jump ahead considerably to the thirteenth century, and discuss St. Thomas Aquinas' synthesis of Christianity and Aristotle's philosophy in the context of the late Middle Ages. Finally, we will cover Machiavelli's thought as an exemplar of both classical republicanism and modern "realism." Throughout the course we will use these historical works to think about some of the perennial issues of political theory: justice; human nature; the best political regime; the relation between morality, religion, and politics; and the nature of virtue, among others.

The aims of the course are essentially two. First, the student should become familiar with the material in the course. S/He should be able to discuss the issues, positions and arguments that we cover, both verbally and in writing, in an informed way. Second, the course will also emphasize the development of skills in critical reading, thinking, and effective communication. These are skills that are central to a liberal arts education, and will be essential to the student's future success, whatever his or her chosen profession or field.

Requirements:

There will be three short papers and a final exam. Each paper is worth 25% of your final grade, and the exam is worth the remaining 25%. There will also be some in-class writing that will be included in the exam portion of your grade. The papers will be 750-1000 words each, and will not require any research beyond the class readings. Students will write papers on three of the five units in the course, and must write a paper on at least one of the first two units. Papers are due in the political science department office, 307 Gilkey Hall, by 4pm on the dates indicated on the schedule (with one exception, noted below). More specific paper guidelines will be distributed about a week before each paper is due. Late papers will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is an extremely serious matter. Students are expected to properly cite any sources used in writing their papers (including internet sources), and to work alone and without notes on the examinations. Violations of academic honesty will result in failing the course, and will be reported to the proper university authorities for further action. For a description of Oregon State's policies on academic honesty, see the website at: <http://success.oregonstate.edu/study/honesty.cfm>.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom:

During class students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices including cellphones, ipods, pagers, etc. Use of computers is permitted for note-taking only, not for emailing, surfing the web, instant messaging, etc.

Readings:

The following books are required for the course, and are available at the OSU bookstore:

Plato, *The Republic*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996

Augustine, *Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Politics and Ethics*. New York: Norton, 1988.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*. New York: Bantam, 2003.

Schedule:

This schedule is tentative, and subject to change. Changes will be announced in class, and it is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of any such changes.

1. Sept. 26: Course Introduction.

I. Plato

2. Sept. 28: What is Justice? Read Plato, *The Republic*, Book I.

3. Oct. 3: Justice as Harmony. Read Plato, Books II-III.

[Oct. 5: No class.]

4. Oct. 10: The Guardians. Read Plato, Books IV-V.

5. Oct. 12: Philosopher-Kings. Read Plato, Books VI-VII.

6. Oct. 17: Defective Regimes. Read Plato, Books VIII-IX.

Oct. 18: Plato paper due.

II. Aristotle

7. Oct. 19: Household and Polis. Read Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book I.

8. Oct. 24: Citizenship and Democracy. Read Aristotle, Books II-III.

9. Oct. 26: Comparing Regimes. Read Aristotle, Book IV.

10. Oct. 31: Dynamics of Political Change. Read Aristotle, Books V-VI.

11. Nov. 2: The Ideal Polis. Read Aristotle, Books VII-VIII.

Nov. 5: Aristotle paper due.

III. Augustine

12. Nov. 7: The Fall of Rome. Read Augustine, excerpts from *City of God*, Books I-V.

13. Nov. 9: Christianity and Politics. Read Augustine, pp. 202-256.

Nov. 12: Augustine paper due.

IV. Aquinas

14. Nov. 14: The Synthesis of Aristotle and Christianity. Read Aquinas, pp. 3-44.

15. Nov. 16: Law and Politics. Read Aquinas, pp. 44-83.

Nov. 19: Aquinas paper due.

V. Machiavelli

16. Nov. 21: Acquiring States. Read Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters 1-14.

17. Nov. 28: Maintaining States. Read Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters 15-26.

18. Nov. 30: Machiavelli a Republican? Read selections from *The Discourses*, pp. 101-132.

Final Exam: Monday, Dec. 3, 9:30am-11:20am. Machiavelli paper due at final exam.