Early Political & Social Thought

Humanities 203, Sect. 2
Professor: Frank Lovett

Fall 2011
Tuesday/Thursday
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
Ridgley 107

This course offers a critical survey of the main issues and debates in western political and moral thought from the time of the ancient Greeks through the Renaissance, reading such authors as Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Machiavelli, and discussing topics such as justice, virtue, liberty, democracy, and natural law. Students will be introduced to the basic texts in the intellectual history of Western Europe, which will be studied both as products of a particular time and place and as self-contained arguments that strive to instruct and persuade.

Requirements

This course is designed to develop skills in the close and careful reading of difficult texts, and in critical reflection and argumentation with respect to political and moral ideas. Accordingly, the two main components of the course will be interactive class discussion, and guided paper writing. Specific requirements are as follows:

1. **Readings.** All the readings listed below are required; the reading load averages about 100 pages per week, adjusted somewhat according to the difficulty of the text. Since class discussion will concentrate on these readings, always bring the book we are reading with you to class.

2. **Attendance and participation.** As a seminar course, regular and active participation is a must, and will count for 30% of your overall grade. Attendance is required. Legitimate grounds for absence are: (a) religious holidays, if you inform me in advance; and (b) medical emergency, if subsequently demonstrated. In order to receive full credit for attendance, you must be on time.

3. **Three (3) papers, 4–5 pages each.** These three papers will together count for 50% of your overall grade. Paper topics will be provided in advance, along with detailed instructions regarding grading, turning in late papers, and so on. Each paper assignment will be a guided process with several steps, designed to cultivate skills in developing and presenting an argument.

4. **Final exam.** in class on December 8th. This exam will count for 20% of your overall grade. No makeup exams will be offered, barring demonstrable emergencies.
Course Materials

For this course you will need all the following books, which are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore:

- Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett)
- Augustine, *City of God* (Penguin)
- Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier* (Penguin)
- Cicero, *The Republic and The Laws* (Oxford)
- Dante, *Monarchy* (Cambridge)
- Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Plato, *Republic* (Cambridge)
- Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Penguin)

There are many good editions of all these books, and if you happen to own some already, do not feel obligated to buy these particular editions. However, you may find it easier during class discussion if you have the same edition as your classmates!

Additional readings will be made available online at ARES through the library website (the course password is ‘LovettF11’).

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

August 30       Introduction (no assignment)

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE POLIS

                 Plutarch, “Life of Lycurgus” (online)


September 13    Plato, *Republic*, bks. 1–2

September 15    Plato, *Republic*, bks. 3–4

September 20    Plato, *Republic*, bks. 5–6
September 22  Plato, *Republic*, bks. 7–8

September 23  **First Paper Due** (12:00 noon)

September 27  Plato, *Republic*, bks. 9–10

September 29  Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. I: chs. 1–2; *Ethics*, selections (online)


October 6  Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. III: chs. 6–7; bk. IV: chs. 1–14; bk. V: chs. 1–4, 8–9

**II. INDIVIDUAL AND EMPIRE**

October 11  Hellenistic Philosophy I: Science and Knowledge (all online)
  Diogenes Laertius, “Life of Pyrrho”
  Sextus Empiricus, “General Principles”
  Epicurus, “Letter to Herodotus” and “Principal Doctrines”
  Diogenes Laertius on Stoic “Physics” and “Logic”

October 13  Hellenistic Philosophy II: Ethics and Politics (all online)
  Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus”
  Diogenes Laertius on Stoic “Ethics”
  Aulus Gellius and Cicero on “Fate”
  Epictetus, “The Handbook”
  Seneca, “On the Private Life”

October 18  Polybius, *Rise of the Roman Empire* (online)


October 21  **Second Paper Due** (at 12:00 noon)


October 27  Augustine, *City of God*, bk. V: preface, chs. 1, 8–19, 24; bk. VIII: chs. 4–13; bk. XI: chs. 1–8; bk. XII: chs. 1–9, 28

November 1  Augustine, *City of God*, bk. XIV: chs. 1–6, 11–18, 21–28; bk. XV: chs. 1–2, 4–5; bk. XIX: chs. 1–7, 12–21, 24–28; bk. XXII: ch. 30
III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAW AND STATE

            Averroes, “The Decisive Treatise …” (online)


             Dante, *Monarchy*, bk. I: chs. i–xvi

             Marsilius, *Defender of the Peace*, selections (online)


November 18  **Third Paper Due** (12:00 noon)

November 22–24 No class (Thanksgiving)

November 29  Machiavelli, “The Prince,” dedication, chs. 1–3, 5–9, 12–13, 15–19, 21–26

December 1  Machiavelli, “The Discourses,” bk. I: preface, chs. 1–6, 9, 16–18, 27, 34, 55, 58; bk. II: chs. 1–2; bk. III: ch. 9

December 6  Final course review

December 8  **Final Exam** (in class)