

Political Science 301 – Classical Political Philosophy**OVERVIEW**

In this class we will be reading some of the seminal texts of Greek and Roman political thought. We will consider political issues raised by these readings including the proper relation between the individual and the state, the best forms of government, who should rule, how we determine whether a society is just, and the nature of duty and obligation. We will also consider the philosophical process itself as it emerges within Greek thought. What is the role of reason amidst the claims of foundational truths and knowledge? These issues and questions are still highly relevant in current complex and turbulent times, and we read these texts to help us ask important questions about our own social and political environments.

The questions which emerge from these inquiries are not easily resolvable, yet they often shape the ways in which societies function and the manner in which individuals live their lives. You should not approach the readings in this class expecting to discover at the conclusion a singular answer to the questions posed. You should view this course as a process of engagement. You, the student, have an important role to play in this engagement. You are not simply an empty receptacle expected to memorize texts. Rather, it is up to you to analyze and organize the viewpoints of the various theorists under consideration and to provide coherent, cogent arguments as to how you think it is best to approach the problematics we will consider. However, in order to construct a good argument you must read the texts carefully and with great thought. You must consider the arguments presented in the texts and be able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Distinguish systematic normative inquiry from other kinds of inquiry within the discipline of political science.

- Write a clear and coherent expository synopsis of the theory of a major thinker in the history of political thought.
- Identify the most important contributors to classical political thought and explain why their contributions are important.
- Understand and explain the central concepts in classical political thought.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply abstract theory to concrete problems by using the ideas of political theorists to address contemporary social issues.

Political Science 301 – Classical Political Philosophy**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Students are expected to attend all classes, to have read the assigned materials and to participate in class discussion. An excused absence requires written documentation. All medical documentation must be given to me (not merely shown to me) and must include the student's name as well as the name of a medical doctor or clinic with a verifiable phone number. Students who do not regularly attend class will receive an "F" for their class participation grade. Students who miss classes or assignments with a valid excuse should consult with me in order to make up their work in a timely fashion.
2. Written work will consist of two papers and a final exam. In the papers you will not be answering survey-type questions (e.g., - what does Plato mean by Forms?). Rather, you will be given a "prompt" which offers a particular argument or contention which you must defend or contest.
 - **First Paper** – 3-4 pages (topic to be assigned)
 - **Second Paper** – 3-4 pages (topic to be assigned)
 - **Final Exam** – will include all the materials we have read and discussed in class. Exam will be open book, open notes.

Papers do not require outside research. They are to utilize the course readings pertinent to the theorists assigned above to each topic. Papers must be centered on the readings and must utilize assigned texts. You may also utilize current social and political events as examples of your assertions, but examples are not substitutes for arguments. The course readings are your research materials for the papers – papers must cite textual evidence in the proffering of assertions and the formulation of arguments.

Late papers will not be accepted without a grade reduction except for viable medical reasons, University sanctioned activities, or death in the family. Written documentation will be required.

The last chance to hand in a paper is with your final exam. If you hand in a viable paper, the lowest grade will be a D, even with deductions. If you do not hand in a paper, the grade is F.

Though you should already know the following, it always bears repeating. *Do not plagiarize.* Do not utilize outside sources, even those that supposedly offer merely objective information. We are approaching the texts and the theorists in very specific ways, aligning them with questions concerning the construction of the political realm and the viability of attempts to alter or subverting dominant social and cultural norms. It is highly unlikely you will find suitable arguments for your papers from other sources. *Plagiarism will be dealt with severely.*

Students are not allowed to use computers during class lectures and discussions..

The procedures for withdrawal from this course will conform to university policies.

Political Science 301 – Classical Political Philosophy**GRADING**

- 20% Class participation and attendance

Participation includes attendance. Excellent participation is when, in the instructor's judgment, the student contributes regularly in ways that demonstrate both an *understanding* of the reading materials *as well as* thoughtful *consideration* of and *reflection* on the issues and themes that are addressed in readings and in class discussion.

- 20% First paper
- 30% Second paper
- 30% Final Exam

COURSE MATERIALS**BOOKS**

- Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (trans. Tredennick and Tarrant, Penguin Classics)
- Plato: *The Republic* (translated by Francis MacDonald Cornford, Oxford University Press)
- Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens* (ed. Stephen Everson, Cambridge University Press)
- Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws* (ed. James E.G. Zetzel, Cambridge University Press)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Penguin Classics)

CONTACT

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ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: 9/4 Introduction, Discussion of Socrates

SOCRATES: THE APOLOGY AND CRITO

WEEK 2: 9/11 *The Apology, Crito*

PLATO: THE REPUBLIC

WEEK 3: 9/18 Introductory Lecture, Part I: 1-40
WEEK 4: 9/25 Part II: 41-174
WEEK 5: 10/2 Part III: 175-263
WEEK 6: 10/9 Part IV, V, VI: 264-359

***FIRST PAPER DUE 10/16**

ARISTOTLE: THE POLITICS

WEEK 7: 10/16 *Nicomachean Ethics*: 3-7, Books I, II: 11-60
WEEK 8: 10/23 Books III, IV, V: 61-152
WEEK 9: 10/30 Books VI, VII, VIII: 153-207

***SECOND PAPER DUE 11/13**

CICERO: ON THE COMMONWEALTH AND ON THE LAWS

WEEK 10: 11/6 *On the Commonwealth*, Books 1, 2: 1-58
WEEK 11: 11/13 *On the Commonwealth*, Books 3-6: 59-103
WEEK 12: 11/20 *On the Laws*, Books 1-3: 105-175

WEEK 13: 11/27 Thanksgiving Break

MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE

WEEK 14: 12/4 Books I-XIII: 7-47
WEEK 15: 12/11 Books XIV-XXVI: 47-85

WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM