

POLITICAL SCIENCE 201: Ancient to Early Modern Political Thought

Professor Leonard Feldman
Department of Political Science
Hunter College

Spring 2020
Tue, Fri, 12:45-2:00 pm
HW 1729

Office: HW1702

Phone: 212-396-6246

Email: lfeldman@hunter.cuny.edu

Office hours: Tuesday and Friday 2:30-3:30 pm, and by appointment

This class provides an introduction to some of the main texts of Western political theory from the ancient and medieval periods. We will pay particular attention to the conceptions of human nature, justice, in/equality and the ideal political order; to the theorists' accounts of the obligations of citizens to their political community; and to how "ancient" approaches to politics differ from "modern" ones.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, you will be able to identify central concepts in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern political thought, explain how key thinkers elaborated those concepts. You will be able to trace the development of core arguments in political thought and engage in comparative evaluations of political thinkers, by learning to place their ideas in dialogue with each other. You will learn different approaches to political argumentation, develop your critical reading skills as you interpret difficult theoretical texts, and improve your writing skills, as you develop interpretive, comparative, and evaluative analyses of the texts.

Class Format and General Expectations

This course will be a mixed discussion/lecture format. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. **Bring the text to class, always!**

In general, I will use email to make announcements between classes about assignments, questions to guide your reading etc. I will email you through the blackboard system, so be sure to check that email account regularly.

This course will be a mixed seminar/lecture format. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion.

When I say “do the reading” I don’t mean mechanically going through the text and simply making sure your eyes have scanned the relevant pages. Rather than attempting to read every word, you should attempt to understand and ponder every idea. You are most likely to do this if you read with a pen and paper, writing down ideas, questions, quotes, points of confusion, and points of disagreement.

Furthermore, reading is a reflective process. You may need to read a section, think about it, then read it again, then write about it, discuss it, and read it again. So when I say do the readings, what I mean is, “engage yourself with the ideas of the text.”

I expect that you are learning the material, not that you know it. Furthermore, learning *political theory* is like learning a whole new language. Speaking a new language means taking risks. As much as possible, try not to be shy or embarrassed about what you don’t yet know. Ask questions as often as they come up, read sections of the text aloud in class, talk about the material with others outside of class, try out tentative criticisms and interpretations of the text, and come see me in office hours. These are all great ways to practice speaking and writing the language of political theory.

To get yourself oriented with each new author, I **strongly recommend** that you read Peter Steinberger’s very helpful introductions. They are located at the beginning of each section (Plato, pp. 136-138, Aristotle, pp. 358-360, etc).

For Students with Documented Disabilities and/or Medical Conditions

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call (212) 772-4857/or VRS (646) 755-3129.

Academic Integrity

Any deliberate borrowing of the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others without clear and specific acknowledgment of the source is intellectual theft and is called plagiarism. It is not plagiarism to borrow the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others if the source is clearly and specifically acknowledged. Students who consult such critical material and wish to include some of the insights, ideas, or statements encountered must provide full citations in an appropriate form. Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g.,

plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. If you are unfamiliar with these policies, or unfamiliar with what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult:

<http://catalog.hunter.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=234>

Blackboard

I will make extensive use of Blackboard throughout the term. Review sheets, essay topics and reading questions will be posted there for you to download. I will also make use of Blackboard's communication functions to send important email announcements to you. Thus it is very important for you to (a) check Blackboard regularly and (b) make sure that the email address that Blackboard has registered for you is an email address you check regularly. If it isn't, change your email address on Blackboard by clicking "Update Email" on the upper left-hand tools menu.

Finally, you are required to upload each of your written assignments to blackboard.

Late paper policy: Unless you have a documented medical emergency, a paper not received by the deadline in electronic form via Blackboard will be marked down a third of a grade (e.g., an A will become A-, A- will become B+, etc.) for each day that it is late.

Book to Buy at Shakespeare and Co

There is 1 required text:

Readings in Classical Political Thought, edited by Peter J. Steinberger, available at Shakespeare and Company

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

- **3-4 page paper** due February 14th (10 percent of grade) Apology and Crito
- **An in-class midterm exam** March 13th (20 percent of grade) covering Apology and Crito, Antigone, Republic, and the Politics
- **6-7 page paper** due April 7th (25 percent of grade) Augustine

- **A final take-home exam** due May 19th (30 percent of grade): comprehensive with emphasis on Aquinas and Machiavelli, two questions, 10-12 pages.
- **Class participation** (15 percent of grade): This include attendance, participation in discussion, participation in small group exercises, and in-class writing.

Course Schedule and Readings

Tue 1/28 Course Introduction – No reading

I. GREEK POLITICAL THOUGHT

Plato (and Socrates)

Fri 1/31: “Apology,” pp. 147-159

Tue 2/4: “Crito,” pp. 159-165

Fri 2/7: *Republic*

Book I, entire, pp. 166-181

Book II, entire, pp. 181-196.

Tue 2/11: *Republic*

Book III, pp. 210 (“Then, Glaucon, did those who established...”)–214.

Book IV, entire, pp. 214-229

Fri 2/14: *Republic*

Book V, entire, pp. 229-246

Book VI, pp. 247-250 (“Certainly”); pp. 259 (“We say that there are many beautiful things...”)–262

First paper due on blackboard.

Tue 2/18: *Republic*

Book VII pp. 262-265 (second column, “Indeed”)

Book VIII entire, pp. 276-290

Book IX, entire, pp. 290-303

Greek Drama

Fri 2/21: Sophocles, *Antigone*, pp. 117-135.

Tue 2/25: *Antigone*, continued

Aristotle

Fri 2/28: *Politics*, Books I and II, pp. 377-389

Tue 3/3 *Politics*, Books III, IV and V, pp. 394-409, pp. 415-417

Fri 3/6: *Politics*, Books VII, except chpt 10. Review

Tue 3/10: Review

Fri 3/13: In-class Midterm exam

Tue 3/17 No class

II. MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Augustine

Fri 3/20: *City of God*, pp. 461-474

Tue 3/24: *City of God*, pp. 474-489

Fri 3/27: *City of God*, pp. 489-504

Tue 3/31: Augustine review

Aquinas

(4/1: last day to withdraw with a W grade)

Fri 4/3: *Summa Theologica* pp. 506-524

Tue 4/7 Paper due on Blackboard. No class, classes follow a Wednesday schedule

4/8-4/16: Spring Break

Fri 4/17 *Summa Theologica* pp. 524-542 and *Statesmanship* pp. 542-546

IV. RENAISSANCE POLITICAL THOUGHT

Machiavelli

Tue 4/21 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Letter, chapters 1-11, pp. 549-568

Fri 4/24 Machiavelli, *The Prince* chapter 15-26, pp. 573-591

Tue 4/28 Machiavelli, *Discourses* Book 1, preface, chapters 1-5, 9, 12 (pp. 591-602), chapters 17-18 (pp. 603-606)

Fri 5/1 Machiavelli, *Discourses* Book 1, chapter 42 (p. 608), 55 (pp. 609-611), 58 (611-613).
Book II chpt 29 (pp. 615-616), Book III chpts 1, 3 (pp. 616-619)

Tue 5/5 Reconciling *The Prince* and *the Discourses*

Hans Baron, "Machiavelli the Republican Citizen and the Author of 'the Prince'" (on Blackboard)

Mary Dietz, "Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," (on Blackboard)

Fri 5/8 Machiavelli's relation to what came before him and to what comes after

Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli" (on Blackboard)

John McCormick, "Machiavellian Democracy" (on Blackboard)

Tue 5/12 Review

Take-home final due to Blackboard: Tue 5/19