

21:790:371

EARLY POLITICAL THEORY

Spring 2018

Tuesdays 6:00 to 9:00 pm.

Dr. Segers

Mark Twain defined a classic as “a book everyone wants to have read but no one wants to read.” This course is designed to prove him wrong. Here at Rutgers Newark, we believe that an essential requirement of a liberal arts education is basic familiarity with the classical writings of the Western political tradition.

The course surveys the history of political thought from ancient Greece and Rome, through medieval Christianity, to the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. We are reading some of the most important writings of the Western political tradition. In lectures and class discussions, we will situate the authors in their historical context and consider the applicability of their ideas to our own times. Through the theorists, we will reflect on such questions as: What do human beings want, what makes them happy? What is a good life? What is freedom? How is freedom related to law, order, and security? Are all men and women equal or should they be? Why do we have government? What should government do? What is democracy, is it a good form of government, and is it possible everywhere? Why are people religious believers, and what should be the relationship between religion and politics, church and state? Is there such a thing as just war or a just use of violence? Is imperialism ever justified? Can democracies be imperial powers and remain democracies? Does life, does history have meaning or purpose?

Since this is a course in the history of political theory, we seek to understand how these questions have been addressed and answered at different times, and how this tradition of political thought has shaped our own ideas, attitudes and expectations. We shall pay particular attention this semester to (1) the development of theories of just warfare; and (2) each theorist’s comments---or silence---about the role of women in politics and society.

REQUIRED READINGS (available Rutgers Bookstore, Hahnes Bldg). All are paperbacks.

Plato, The Republic, F. Cornford trans., Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, Politics, Ernest Barker trans., Oxford University Press.

Herbert A. Deane, The Political & Social Ideas of St. Augustine, Columbia Univ. Press.

St. Thomas Aquinas, On Politics and Ethics, Paul Sigmund ed., Norton Critical Editions.

Machiavelli, Selected Political Writings, David Wooten ed., Hackett Publishing Co.

Luther and Calvin, Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority, Harro Hopfl ed., Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Course Requirements:

Midterm and Final Examinations.

Three short quizzes on the readings during the semester.

One-page definitions of key concepts, periodically throughout the semester.

One short paper on Thucydides' The Melian Dialogue. Paper will be graded on content and on writing style so we will pay special attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

One in-class presentation: Each student will make one short presentation showing how the assigned reading for the day casts light on some political event or issue described in a current newspaper, political blog, or news magazine.

Students are expected to attend class regularly, to keep pace with the readings, and to participate knowledgeably in class discussions. Grades will be based on class participation and knowledge of the readings, on quiz grades, definitional statements, short papers, presentations, and on the examinations. Class attendance is very important; no more than two unexcused absences are permissible. Students are responsible for all course readings regardless of whether they are discussed in class.

N.B. According to University policy, absences are excused only in the case of illness, death in the family, religious observance, or official college business. These instances must be documented and also approved in advance when the instance was foreseeable. Note: having an airline ticket to travel (unless it is for one of the documented reasons listed above) is not grounds for an excused absence.

Please note:

Grades will be lowered for papers submitted late.

Makeup examinations will not be given.

Grades of Absent or Incomplete will not be given.

Grading:

Midterm & Final Exams	50%
Short Papers	10%
Quizzes & Definitions	20%
Class Participation	10%
In-Class Presentation	10%

Course Outline**I. INTRODUCTION**

Blueprint for the Study of Political Theory (xerox). Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War (The Melian Dialogue) on line www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/melian.htm. Pericles' Funeral Oration is online at <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/pericles-funeralspeech.asp>.

II. PLATO

Plato, The Republic (entire).

Susan Okin, "Philosopher Queens and Private Wives, Plato on Women and the Family."

III. ARISTOTLE

Aristotle, The Politics (selections)

Christine Pierce, "Natural Law Language and Women."

IV. ROME AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Scriptural passages relevant to politics & government.

Augustine, Excerpts from The City of God.

H.A. Deane, The Political & Social Ideas of St. Augustine

Garry Wills, "What Is a Just War?" **NYRB, Nov. 18, 2004.** www.nybooks.com

VI. MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Sigmund ed., St. Thomas Aquinas on Ethics & Politics (selections)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Online at

www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/mlkbirm.htm.

VII. RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

Machiavelli, The Prince (all), and The Discourses (selections)

Martin Luther, "On Secular Authority," Harro Hopfl, ed.

John Calvin, "On Civil Government," Harro Hopfl, ed.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Summary and Review

Recommended Readings: Here are a few suggestions from a vast literature.

- Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War.
Natalie Harris Bluestone, Women and the Ideal Society.
H.D.F. Kitto, The Greeks
Thomas Cahill, Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter.
J.B. Elshtain, Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social & Political Thought.
Susan Okin, Women in Western Political Thought.
Thomas Cahill, Desire of the Everlasting Hills
Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve and the Serpent
Paul Sigmund, Natural Law in Political Thought.
Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars; and Arguing About War (2004).
Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity.
Garry Wills, Augustine.
St. Augustine, Confessions.
Henry Paolucci, ed., The Political Writings of St. Augustine.
Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo
Frederick H. Russell, The Just War in the Middle Ages.
Margaret Farley, "Sources of Sexual Inequality in the History of Christian Thought,"
Journal of Religion 56:2 (1976), 162-176.
Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War
F. C. Copleston, Aquinas
John Dillenberger, ed., The Political Writings of Martin Luther
John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion
Wendy Brown, Manhood and Politics
Hannah Pitkin, Fortune Is a Woman: Gender & Politics in the Thought of Machiavelli
Joan Kelly, "Did Woman Have a Renaissance?" in Women, History, and Theory.
Roland Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century
Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther.
Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision.
George Klosko, History of Political Theory, Vol. I.
Mushin Mahdi, Islamic Political Thought
Alfarabi, The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.
L. Carl Brown, Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics.

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Early Political Theory

Course Schedule

Spring 2018

- Jan 16: Introduction. Background on the Ancient Greeks and Political Theory. Blueprint for Political Theory. Thucydides: Melian Dialogue from the History of Peloponnesian War.
- Jan. 23: PLATO: Cornford Introduction and Book I of The Republic. One-page definition of justice due. Books II-IV (pp. 41-174).
- Jan 30: PLATO'S Republic, Books V-VII (pp. 175-263). Books VIII-IX (pp. 264-320, 341-348). Discussion of Thucydides' Melian Dialogue Film, The Trial of Socrates.
- Feb. 6: **QUIZ** on Plato's Republic. Susan Okin on Plato, "Philosopher Queens & Private Wives." Introduction to Aristotle (life and context).
- Feb. 13 ARISTOTLE Politics, Bks I and II (pp. 1-56). Definition of equality due. Politics, Bks. III (all) and Book IV, chs. 11-12 (pp. 179-186).
- Feb. 20 ARISTOTLE continued discussion of Books III and part of IV (pp. 179-186). Christine Pierce, "Natural Law Language & Women."
- February 27 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Mar. 6 ROME AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Hellenism and Rome - Cicero On the Republic (excerpt).
Early Christianity: excerpts from Scriptures (handout).
H.A. Deane, ch. 1 of book on Augustine, pp. 1-12.
Film: "Peter, Paul, and the Christian Revolution."
- Mar. 13 Spring Recess (no class).
- Mar. 20 ST. AUGUSTINE on The City of God and The City of Man
H.A. Deane, The Political & Social Ideas of Augustine, chs. 2 to 6.
(on govt, church & state, law, political order, toleration of heresy).
- Mar. 27 **Quiz** on Augustine's political thought. Justifiable war and theories of Just War in Augustine's thought. Garry Wills, "What Is a Just War?" in NYRB, Nov. 18, 2004. Accessible at www.nybooks.com. Film on Islam and its impact after the decline of the Roman Empire. Begin Aquinas.

- Apr. 3 AQUINAS AND MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT
Sigmund, Introduction & pp. 37-38. Definition of law due.
Sigmund, pp. 44-59. Aquinas' Treatise on Law.
Sigmund, pp. 14-28; pp. 61-68 (heresy, war).
- Apr. 10 **QUIZ** on Aquinas. Aquinas on just war theory.
Aquinas on politics and law: legislating morality, obeying an unjust law).
M.L. King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail.* Available online (see above).
- Apr. 17 MACHIAVELLI, THE RENAISSANCE, & THE REFORMATION
The Prince (entire). Definition of power due.
Machiavelli's The Discourses (selections). The precarious nature of politics
between competing Italian city-states during the Renaissance.
- Apr. 24 Reformation Political Thought: How does the State cope with pluralism?
Martin Luther, "On Secular Authority." Excerpts from film on Luther.
John Calvin, "On Civil Government"
Last Class: Review and Summation prior to final exam.
- FINAL EXAM: We follow the Rutgers University Newark schedule of final examinations.
The date of the final exam has not yet been determined. As
soon as that information is available, I will let you know.

