

**Department of Political Science  
Rutgers University, Newark  
Fall 2018**

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Early Political Theory

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11.15am-2.15pm; and by appointment

This course provides students with an introduction to Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance political thought. It begins with the political thought of Ancient Israel, as found in the Books of *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Samuel* of *The Hebrew Bible*. Such a point of departure will help to contextualize the subsequent emergence in the world of the Greek city-states of political theory as a distinctive tradition of discourse. The revolts and reforms that gave birth to democracy in Fifth-century Athens also led to the consequent development of systematic political theorizing. The Greeks reflected on their new political experience in a variety of genres and modes of discourse. The same could be said about the ways in which Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance thinkers inherited and transformed Greek political thought in their respective milieus. In the Roman period, for instance, political theorizing was radically changed in relation to the different spatial configurations and historical processes that characterized the transition from the Roman republic to the empire. Lastly, the emergence of Christianity, and its eventual fate as an imperial religion, will be examined as well as the origins of the third major monotheistic tradition – Islam – and the transmutations of political thought within them. Accordingly, this course examines some of the basic conceptual fields emerging as subjects of political-theoretical reflection from the ancient world to the early Renaissance: democracy, constitutions, justice, equality, and authority, as well as other thematics that defined this experience, say, the tensions associated with the distinctions between demos and the elite, ethics and politics, Christians and Pagans, democracy, empire, power and war. The course then assesses how these ideas concepts travel to, and become transmogrified, in the Roman, medieval and Renaissance world. To explore these themes we will read selections from *The Hebrew Bible*, Aeschylus' *The Oresteia*, Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*, Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*, Aristotle's *Politics*, selections from St. Augustine, Al Farabi, and N. Machiavelli.

**Course Schedule:**

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|------|---|
| 9/4  | Introduction & Selection from S.S. Wolin, <i>Politics and Vision</i> (Blackboard) |
| 9/11 | Hebrew Bible: <i>Genesis</i>  |
| 9/18 | Hebrew Bible: <i>Exodus</i>   |
| 9/25 | Hebrew Bible: <i>Book of Samuel</i>   |
| 10/2 | Aeschylus, <i>The Oresteia: Agamemnon &amp; Libation Bearers</i>                  |

- 10/9           Aeschylus, *The Oresteia: Libation Bearers & Eumenides*  
10/16           Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Books I-III, V, VIII

**First Essay Due on 10/16**

- 10/23           Plato, *Apology & Crito*  
10/30           Aristotle, *Politics*, Books, I, III-IV  
11/6             Aristotle, *Politics*, Books, V-VII  
11/13           Cicero, *Republic & Laws*

**Second Essay Due on 11/13**

- 11/20           **NO CLASS (Thursday Schedule)**  
11/22-11/25   **THANKSGIVING RECESS**  
11/27           Selections from the *Gospels* & St. Augustine; the *Qu'ran* & Alfarabi  
12/4            N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chaps. 1-14  
12/11           N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chaps. 15-26

**FINAL ESSAY Due on 12/18**

**Required Texts:**

Aeschylus, *Aeschylus: Oresteia* (University of Chicago Press)  
Aristotle, *Politics* (Oxford University Press)  
Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Oxford University Press)  
Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett)  
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Hackett)

**Recommended:**

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press)  
Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton University Press)

The required and recommended texts are available for purchase at the University Bookstore (<http://newark-rutgers.bncollege.com>). Please read the texts in the assigned translations/editions, otherwise it will be difficult to follow the lectures and discussions. Translations/editions often vary significantly. **This is an electronic free classroom. So, please, no phones, laptops, or electronic books are allowed; you must bring a hard copy of the assigned reading to class. You'd lose**

**2% of your final grade every time you show up to class without the reading in hand. Make sure that you show me the reading when I call your name at the beginning of each class.**

**Course Requirements:** All students are responsible for the required readings and for participation in class discussions. Your written work consists in three 3-5 page essays. Each essay comprises 30% of your final grade; the remaining 10% of your final grade will consist of participation/attendance. Essay topics will be distributed in class. This is how the 10% for participation/attendance works: if you participate, your grade will be raised (5 points overall); if you violate the attendance policy, your grade will be lowered (5 points overall). Namely, you get 5 points for attending, and an additional 5 for participating. You are permitted three absences for the semester. Any additional absences will result in the aforementioned penalty. A pattern of unexcused absences will result in the student failing the course (you will get an “F” as your final grade). **I reserve the right to conduct oral examinations on your written work.**

**Analytical Papers:** Make sure that your papers are well organized, clearly and carefully argued, as well as textually supported. Please avoid randomly collecting unanalyzed quotes. We are going to spend some time discussing the structure of an adequate theory paper.

**Cautionary Note/Important Advice:** There are several things that you should keep in mind to avoid unpleasant surprises. I expect students to critically ponder the arguments each thinker presents and to make an effort to understand these arguments with the goal of developing a rigorous and informed critique. Second, the texts under scrutiny are sometimes dry, difficult, and dense, therefore, it is important that you have your thoughts together when you work your way through these texts. As a piece of advice, I encourage you to do the readings when you are awake and in an environment conducive to study, otherwise it will be difficult for you to keep up with the class.

**Academic Integrity:** All work you submit for the course is expected to be your own. Cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation) will lead to failing the course and action from the University. Whenever you quotes, closely paraphrase, refer to or make use of arguments or examples from other sources in your written work, you must cite the appropriate source in a footnote, endnote, or in parentheses at the end of the sentence, depending of what citation style you are using. Please see the university’s guidelines on student conduct: <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct>

### **Disability Accommodations**

Students requiring special accommodations for disabilities are welcome and should provide reasonable prior notice so we can make needed arrangements.

**Miscellaneous:** Our classroom discussions are open, frank, and casual. Please respect the perspectives and inquiries of your peers and instructor. Do not interrupt someone who is speaking and refrain from deliberately demeaning language or intimidating behavior. Do not read newspapers or other unrelated materials during class. **Students found doing so will be dismissed. Please make sure that cell-phones are turned off. If your cell-phone rings during class you will be dismissed. There are No exceptions to this rule. All written work is to be typed and double-spaced. Incomplete grades will NOT be automatically given; these will be granted only in reference to particular situations and at the instructor’s discretion.**

