

Classics of Social and Political Thought I
Autumn 2017

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100

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This course is a collaborative study of four philosophers' reflections on how humans live together as social beings and organize political institutions, and on how they should be doing so. We will read, discuss, and analyze Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Niccolò Machiavelli's influential responses to questions such as what justice entails, who should rule and what measure of equality or inequality is desirable, what good citizens are obligated to do, and how one should pursue the common good. This will be an opportunity to understand their thought on their own terms, while familiarizing ourselves with works and concepts that have greatly influenced later thinkers and political actors, and also reflecting on and deepening our own ideas on such matters.

Throughout the quarter (and year!), we will encounter unfamiliar and difficult arguments. You may find many of them novel and intriguing; others may strike you as unconvincing if not repellent. We will learn to ground our responses to their claims on close readings of the text and on rigorous argumentation of our own. As such, the course also aims to develop your ability to read and interpret complex texts, to do so critically *and* generously, and to marshal evidence for your views. We will consider how these authors defend and justify their specific claims, how these claims relate to one another and fit into their overall projects, and what broader social and political systems they are constructing. Indeed, while these texts may seem abstract at times, they are also political texts. Some of the authors we will read played a role in the public affairs of their time; all were animated by concerns and assumptions regarding the world around them.

Required books (available at the Seminary Co-Op):

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1991)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 2017)

Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan, ed. William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan (2nd ed.) (Hackett, 2002)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (2nd ed.) (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Make sure to acquire these specific editions. This is important to enable group discussion and close readings. I will only grade papers that make use of these editions. Also, remember to bring your book to class on relevant days.

Course requirements

You are expected to attend every class and be an active participant. You will write three papers during the quarter. You are also each responsible for discussion questions for two sessions. The first paper will make up 20% of your grade. The second and third will make up 25% each. A participation grade (determined by your involvement in class discussion, your attendance, and the quality of your discussion questions) will make up the remaining 30%.

Participation: The one thing I cannot overstate is that this course, like all seminars, is a collective effort so your involvement is crucial. The more people are active, the more we can work out the issues that you encounter. No question is too basic to be voiced in class, nor do you need to be certain of an answer to share your thoughts. If there is something in a text that you find challenging or confusing, chances are others find it challenging or confusing as well! These are complicated texts that raise difficult issues. Class time should be an opportunity for you to raise problems you have about the text and to discuss concerns and interpretations with each other. As such, participation will be an important part of your evaluation for this course.

While participation refers to whether you contribute to the discussion, it also refers to the respect and attentiveness you display toward each other. Jumpstarting a conversation requires that we listen to each other and make an effort to respond to other people's questions and thoughts.

Discussion will be stronger if you take the time to read these texts carefully and to identify areas of interest or of concern. **I encourage you to take notes while you are reading.** This will help you organize your thoughts and it will make it easier for you to raise questions or point us toward important or confusing passages while in class.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class, unless you have a medical reason or compelling personal reason requiring you to miss it. If you have such a reason, please contact me *before the class*, and as soon as you know about it. An unexcused absence will lower your participation grade. Repeated unexcused absences will severely affect it, up to a failing participation grade.

Class questions: You will each sign up for two sessions at the beginning of the quarter. For those two sessions, you will write a discussion question and share it with the class via e-mail **by 8pm the evening before**. You should spell out something that you find puzzling, ambiguous, or meaningful in the readings and over which you would like to engage the class in a discussion. Your question should be no longer than a paragraph. Don't hesitate to keep the question simple, but make sure to explain what it is that you find worth discussing as a group.

While in class, I will ask you to present your question and direct a brief discussion around it. **All students must come to class prepared to discuss the day's discussion questions.**

Paper assignments: You will write three papers during the quarter. (Due dates are on the schedule.) You will be expected to make a clear argument by gathering textual evidence and presenting it in an organized manner; no supplementary material is necessary or expected.

Late papers: I will deduct one-third of a letter grade for each day the paper is late.

Course completion: You need to have turned in all three papers and to have attended more than half the sessions in order to pass the course.

Other important matters

Office hours: If there is something about the texts that you find perplexing or exciting, or if you simply want to talk about the course further, please do come my office hours! Even a short conversation could clear up a point about which you want clarification and open up new perspectives on the text, which will be helpful when the time comes to write a paper. You can schedule to meet me at another time if you have a conflict during my office hours.

Use of electronic devices: Unless you require an electronic device as part of the accommodation of a disability, in-class computer use or phone use is not permitted.

Plagiarism: Academic honesty requires that you hand in your own original work. You must cite any source you draw on while writing the paper, whether you quote it directly or not. You are also not allowed to turn in a paper that you have written or are writing for another class. **Any breach of these rules is a very serious matter.** Plagiarism may lead to a failing grade for the course, as well as to disciplinary action by the College.

Talk to me if you have *any* question about the appropriate standards and about what it means to properly cite sources. I also encourage you to read the Writing Program's detailed guidelines: http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but_what_if_you_get_stuck.htm#_Toc431538594

Writing assistance: First-year students can talk to the writing interns of their Humanities Core section. All students can consult the writing tutors who work at Harper Library. See here for more details: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/tutor.htm>. You may also benefit from the Writing Program's guide to college writing, available at the following link: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/index.htm>

Course schedule

Monday, September 25: Course introduction

Weeks 1-4: Plato

Wednesday, Sept. 27: *The Republic*, Book I (pp.3-34)

Monday, Oct. 2: *The Republic*, Book II, Book III through 402a (pp.35-80)

Wednesday, Oct. 4: *The Republic*, Book III 402b to the end, Book IV (pp.80-125)

Monday, Oct. 9: *The Republic*, Book V, Book VI through 497b (pp.127-176)

Wednesday, Oct. 11: *The Republic*, Book VI 497c to the end, Book VII (pp.177-220)

Friday, Oct. 13 (by 3pm): *First paper due*

Monday, Oct. 16: *The Republic*, Book VIII and Book IX through 580c (pp.221-261)

Wednesday, Oct. 18: *The Republic*, Book IX 580d to the end, Book X (pp.261-303)

Weeks 5-6: Aristotle

Monday, Oct. 23: *Ethics*, Book I, §§1-7, §10, §13; Book II, §§1-6; Book X, §§6-9 (on Canvas, pp.1-12, 16-18, 19-31, 192-203)

Wednesday, Oct. 25: *Politics* Book I: §§1-7, §§12-13; Book II: §§1-5, §7

Monday, Oct. 30: *Politics* Book III (entire)

Wednesday, Nov. 1: *Politics* Book IV: §§1-13; Book V: §§1-2, §5, §§8-9, §§11

Monday, Nov. 6: *Politics* Book VI: §§1-4; Book VII: §§1-5, §§7-10, §§13-17; Book VIII: §§1-3

Week 7: Aquinas

Wednesday, Nov. 8: In *On Law, Morality, and Politics: Summa Theologica*, I-II, Questions 90-95 (pp. 10-59)

Friday, Nov. 10 (by 3pm): Second paper due

Monday, Nov. 13: In *On Law, Morality, and Politics: Summa Theologica* I-II, Q. 96-97 (pp. 59-75); Q. 100 A. 2, 8-9 (pp. 77-79, 81-86); Q. 105 A. 1 (pp. 93-96); II-II Q. 57 A. 2 (pp. 100-101); Q. 58 A. 2 (pp. 107-108); Q. 40 A. 1 (pp. 164-167); Q. 104 A. 5-6 (pp. 182-185); Q. 42 A. 2 (pp. 188-189); Q. 10 A. 8, 11, Q. 11 A. 3, *Commentary on the Sentences* 44, 37 (pp. 190-196); *On Kingship* I 6 (pp. 207-210)

Weeks 8-10: Machiavelli

Wednesday, Nov. 15: *The Prince*, Appendix (pp. 107-111), Letter and Chapters 1-7 (pp.3-25)

Monday, Nov. 20: *The Prince*, Chapters 8-14 (pp.34-60), also *Discourses*, Book I, Preface and Chapters 2-6, and 10 (on Canvas, pp. 5-6, 10-23, 31-33)

Wednesday, Nov. 22: No class (Happy Thanksgiving)

Monday, Nov. 27: *The Prince*, Chapters 15-26 (pp.61-106) and *Discourses*, Book III, Chapter 9 (on Canvas, pp.239-241)

Wednesday, Nov. 29: *Discourses*, Dedicatory Letter; Book I, Chapters 9, 11-12, 16-18, 47, and 53-58; Book II, Chapters 2 and 23; Book III, Chapter 3 and 24 (on Canvas, pp. 3-4, 28-30, 34-39, 44-58, 96-99, 105-119, 129-133, 214-215, 269-270)

Monday, December 4th (by 3pm): third paper due