

## **POLS 011 Ancient Political Theory**

*Jonny Thakkar*

**Fall 2019  
T/Th 11:20-12:35pm  
Trotter 201**

**Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3pm in Trotter 319  
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### **Course Description**

A survey of the tradition of political theory that runs from the ancient Greeks and Romans through to medieval Christendom and then the Renaissance, taking in a wide array of thinkers including Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero, Augustine, Alfarabi, Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, Luther, More, Machiavelli and Montaigne. Topics include realism and idealism; nature and convention; the merits of different constitutions; the responsibilities of leaders; and church and state. Ideally students would pair this course with Modern Political Thought (POLS 012) as a coherent sequence because the readings have been selected with that in mind.

### **Course Objectives**

This course aims to give you an understanding of the development of European political thought up to the Renaissance—but since the ideas in question tend to be radically different from our own, it also aims to confront you with powerful challenges to your own beliefs and hence to force you to consider what you really believe and why. Like any course in political philosophy, this course will develop your ability to make and evaluate arguments, both in writing and in conversation, and thereby help you think clearly and critically about politics and society.

### **Course Evaluation**

Participation	10%
2 Argument Outlines	10%
2 Papers	50%
Final Exam	30%

### **Papers**

Each student is required to write two papers of 6-7 pages (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman). You should hand in a printed copy of each paper at the start of class on the relevant day. Late work will be marked down by one full grade per day late, with the first day beginning immediately after the deadline, unless there is documentary evidence of an emergency or prior arrangements have been made due to exceptional circumstances. Please

note that foreseeable workload crises due to midterms, sporting competitions, theatrical productions and so on do not count as exceptional circumstances at Swarthmore.

### **Final Exam**

Each student is required to take the final examination, which is designed to test your comprehension of the material covered in class and in the readings. It will consist of a combination of short commentaries and essay questions.

### **Participation**

Although this is primarily a lecture course, it will also be interactive. There is no participation grade as such, but the quality of your participation may lead me to adjust your overall grade upwards or downwards within the bounds of the rubric above. You should arrive at class having read and annotated the material, ready to ask at least one clearly formulated question and point to at least one discussion-worthy passage if called upon. During class you should take notes, and at the end of each class you should make a note of anything that remains unclear to you.

In order to facilitate this process, each of you must post a discussion question on Moodle by 10:30am on each day of class. The purpose of this assignment is (a) to help me structure our class time and (b) to help you produce papers that advance controversial theses. With these goals in mind, your questions should not be requests for information or clarification. Rather, you should isolate a specific proposition or argument in the reading that you find particularly challenging or controversial – something where you feel pulled by considerations on both sides – and try to explain why you think it would be interesting and important for us to discuss. This will involve giving some sense of the argumentative back-and-forth as you see it playing out, e.g. by outlining two competing answers to a given question or by posing a challenge to the author and then sketching the response you imagine them giving.

### **Other Requirements**

Please refrain from using mobile phones and laptops during class unless you have a special reason to do so and have therefore asked permission from me beforehand; if at all possible, please print the readings rather than accessing them on your computer during class. For an explanation of this policy, please see the presentation of scientific research concerning the effect of electronics on cognitive outcomes that I have uploaded to Moodle.

Office hours represent an opportunity to discuss the course material further, to get a sense of where you can improve and to raise questions and concerns about the way class is being conducted. Every student is required to come to office hours at least once during the first half of the semester in order to establish personal contact regarding these matters.

Finally, please note that students found to have plagiarized work or otherwise cheated will fail the course. If you have any doubt as to what constitutes academic misconduct, please check with me or consult the College's guidelines.

## Disability Accommodations

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W, 123W) via e-mail at [studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu) to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Services website. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services.

## Required Texts

The following texts are required for use in class. They are all available via the College Bookstore, and the Underhill Library might also have copies. I have listed them in the order in which they will be required. Please use the editions below if at all possible.

Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature* (Hackett)

Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett)

Plato, *Republic*, tr. Reeve (Hackett)

Aristotle's *Politics*, tr. Barnes (Princeton)

The Bible: Authorized King James Version (Oxford)

Augustine, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Aquinas, *Political Writings* (Cambridge)

Thomas More, *Utopia* (Cambridge)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Penguin)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (Oxford)

## Schedule

### Democracy and Empire

9/3 Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature*

### The Life and Death of Socrates

9/5 Plato, *Euthyphro*; Plato, *Apology*

9/10 Plato, *Crito*

### Plato's *Republic*

9/12 Plato, *Republic*, Books II-III

9/17 Plato, *Republic*, Book IV; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V\*

9/19 Plato, *Republic*, Book V; Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II, 1-5 (**FIRST OUTLINE DUE**)

9/24 Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-VII

9/26 Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-IX

### Aristotle's *Politics*

10/1 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I and II\*

10/3 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X; Aristotle, *Politics*, Books VII-VIII

10/8 Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I and III

10/10 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II, 9; Book IV, 1-14; Book V; and Book VI. 1-3, 5-6, 8  
(**FIRST PAPER DUE**)

## FALL BREAK

### The Roman Republic

10/22 Polybius, *Histories*, Book VI.1-18 and 43-57\*; Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Books I and II\*

10/24 Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Book III and Book VI, 8-29\*; Cicero, *On the Laws*, Bk 1, 17-35 and Bk II, 8-14\*; Cicero, *On Ends*, III.62-68\*; "Stobaeus on the Doctrine of Hierocles"\*

## **The Bible**

10/29 *The Book of Genesis*, chs. 1-22; *The Book of Job*

10/31 *The Gospel of Matthew*; Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*

## **Augustine's *City of God***

11/5 Augustine, *City of God*, Books II-V, VIII and XI-XV (in *Political Writings*)

11/7 Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX, XXII; Augustine, "War"; "Letter 133, to Marcellinus" in "The Uses of Persecution"; "Property"; "The Status of Women"; Lying (all in *Political Writings*)

## **Medieval Syntheses**

11/12 Alfarabi, *Book of Religion\** and *Political Regime* (§64-§126)\*; *The Qu'ran* (selections)

11/14 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, "The attainment of happiness"\*  
Aquinas on Law (*Political Writings*, 76-157)

11/19 Aquinas on Property and Justice (*Political Writings*, 1-4, 168-171, 205-232)  
Aquinas on Unbelief, Heresy and Apostasy (*Political Writings*, 267-278)  
Aquinas on War, Peace and Sedition (*Political Writings*, 239-250)

11/21 Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of the Peace*, Discourse I\*

## **Renaissance Humanism**

11/26 Thomas More, *Utopia* (**SECOND OUTLINE DUE**)

11/28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

12/3 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, including Dedicatory Letter

12/5 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, Bk I, Dedication and Prefaces, chs. 1-7, 10-14, 16-19, 25-32, 41-47, 49-58; Bk II, Preface, chs. 1-2, 29, 33; Bk III, chs. 1-9, 49

12/10 Michel de Montaigne, "To the Reader", "On habit", "On the Cannibals", "On experience"

12/12 **SECOND PAPER DUE**

TBA **FINAL EXAM**