

PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS FOR FALL 2024: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Political Science 0600: Ancient Political Thought

Prof. Jeffrey Green (jegr@sas.upenn.edu)

Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics, Room 338

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course aims to provide a broad survey of some of the most influential political thinkers and ideas from classical antiquity. Among the central figures to be examined are: Homer, Sophocles, Thucydides, Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, Jesus, and Augustine. Major themes include: ancient theories of justice (with special attention to the relation between the just state and the just person), the emergence of political philosophy as a distinct pursuit, the Athenian polis, the Roman republic and its demise, and the rise of Christianity.

The course is divided into four main units. In the first unit (“The Birth of Political Philosophy”), we explore the most famous paradigms of Greco-Roman political philosophy, including the seminal contributions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as the “schools” of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Cynicism, which came to dominate the Hellenistic world. Among the features uniting most of the authors of the first unit is the attempt to discover a science of human happiness as well as the attempt to hold the political world accountable to allegedly universalistic standards of right. The apparent absence of these ambitions defines the contributions of the second unit (“Political Thought Before Political Philosophy”), in which we examine some of the most noteworthy contributions from earliest Greek political thinking—specifically, the work of Homer and Thucydides as well as one instance of Greek tragedy (Sophocles’ *Antigone*)—all of which arguably operate without a commitment to universalistic standards of justice and without the promise of unlocking the keys to human happiness. In the third unit, the course turns to examination of the two most historically influential political regimes in the ancient world—Athens and Rome—discussing, among other themes, the institutional structures of these polities and Rome’s transition from republic to empire. In the final section of the course (“The Idea of Revelation and Its Political Significance”), we confront the phenomenon of revelation as something potentially outside the purview of the political thinking of the first and second units, paying attention both to the generic structure of revelation and to the specific form of Christian revelation that came to have a profound impact on the political philosophy of the West.

All readings will be made available on the course Canvas site. Students who wish to purchase hardcopies, such get the specific editions listed below:

- Max Weber, *Vocation Lectures*, trans. Livingstone (Hackett, 2004)

- Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, trans. Grube, revised by Cooper (Hackett, 3rd Edition, 2000)
- Plato, *Republic*, trans. Reeve (Hackett, 2004)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ostwald (Pearson, 1999)
- *The Epicurus Reader*, trans. and ed. Brad Inwood (Hackett, 1994)
- Homer, *The Essential Iliad*, trans. Lombardo (Hackett, 2000)
- Sophocles, *The Oedipus Cycle*, trans. Fitts & Fitzgerald (Mariner, 2002)
- Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, trans. Woodruff (Hackett, 1993)

Grades will be earned on the basis of three 7-page (double-spaced) papers (25% each), a short final exam based primarily on identifying textual passages from the course (15%), and participation in recitation (10%).

Course Outline

- 8/28: Introduction—Why study ancient political thought?
- 9/2: No Class: Labor Day
- 9/4: The Opposite of Ancient: Modernity
 - Reading: Max Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, in *Vocation Lectures*

PART I: THE BIRTH OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- 9/9: Socrates
 - Reading: Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 1-42
- 9/11: Socrates continued
 - Reading: Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 43-58
- 9/16: Plato's *Republic*
 - Reading: Books 1-2
- 9/18: Plato's *Republic* continued
 - Reading: Books 3-5
- 9/23: Plato's *Republic* continued
 - Reading: Books 6-8 (minus 216-237)
- 9/25: Finishing Plato
 - Reading: *Republic*, Books 9-10; "Seventh Letter"
- 9/30: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

- Reading: pp. 3-51, 93-98, 286-295; table of Aristotelian virtues
- 10/2: Aristotle's *Politics*
 - Reading: Book 1 and the beginning of Book 2, pp. 1-34
- 10/7: Aristotle's *Politics* continued
 - Reading: Selections from Books 3, 4 and 5 [approx. 19 pages]
- 10/9: Stoicism
 - Reading: Epictetus, *Handbook*; Epictetus, two brief selections from his *Discourses*; Marcus Aurelius, selections from *Meditations*; Stobaeus on the Doctrine of Hierocles
- 10/14: Epicureanism
 - Reading: *The Epicurus Reader*, vii-xv, 3-4, 28-40 (texts #4, #5 and #6)
- 10/16: Cynicism
 - Reading: "Diogenes," in *The Cynic Philosophers from Diogenes to Julian*, trans. Robert Dobbin (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 28-60

PART II: POLITICAL THOUGHT BEFORE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- 10/21: Homer's *Iliad*
 - Reading: *The Essential Iliad*, 1-71
- 10/23: Homer's *Iliad*
 - Reading: *The Essential Iliad*, 72-157
- 10/28: Sophocles' *Antigone*
 - Reading: *The Oedipus Cycle*, 186-245
- 10/30: Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War
 - Reading: *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, 1-4, 11-13, 15-58, 66-76
- 11/4: Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War continued
 - Reading: *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, 89-109, 111-123, 127-128, 145-160 (these last pages, 145-160, can be skimmed)
- 11/6: NO CLASS

PART III: ATHENS AND ROME

- 11/11: Athenian and Roman Political Institutions

- Reading: Simon Hornblower, “Creation and Development of Democratic Institutions in Ancient Greece,” 1-16; Sanford Lakoff, “Plural Autonomy: Roman and Later Republicanism,” 65-85; Richard Katz, “Rome,” in *Democracy and Elections*, 14-18 (*); “Cicero’s Stoicism: A Collection of Quotes”
- 11/13: The Roman transition from Republic to Empire
 - Reading: Seneca, “On Mercy”; Tacitus, “From Augustus to Tiberius,” in *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, 31-42; Suetonius, “Nero,” with special attention to pp. 239-265

PART IV: THE IDEA OF REVELATION AND ITS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 11/18: Revelation in the Old and New Testaments
 - Selections from the Old Testament; Selections from the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament, in *The Poems of Jesus Christ* (trans. Willis Barnstone), 1-26, 33-34, 36-48, 63-4, 74-5; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction*, 35-54, 57-62, 68-90, 95-109
- 11/20: Augustine and the Politicization of Christianity
 - Reading: *The City of God against the Pagans*, Book 1: Preface, chs. 1-4, 7-9, 15, 28-36; Book 2: chs. 19-21; Book 5: chs. 13-15, 19-21, 24
- 11/25: No Class: Thanksgiving
- 11/27: No Class: Thanksgiving
- 12/2: Augustine continued
 - Reading: *The City of God against the Pagans*, Book 14: chs. 4, 9, 28; Book 19: chs. 4-8, 10, 17-21, 24-25, 27-28
- 12/4: Concluding Remarks
- 12/9: Optional Review Session to Discuss Exam and Third Paper

Note to Students:

This course counts for the History and Tradition Sector (Sector 2) for those College of Arts and Sciences students not majoring in PSCI. If your only major is PSCI, you can either apply this class to the PSCI major or to the History and Tradition Sector (Sector 2), but not both. If you are majoring in PSCI and something else, contact Bess Davis

(bdavis3@sas.upenn.edu) because whether this class counts for the History and Tradition Sector (Sector 2) differs depending on your other major(s).