

PSCI 2202: Ancient Political Thought

Fall 2016
TR, 9:35 am-10:50 am
Furman Hall 311

Professor Emily Nacol
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12 p.m.-1:00 p.m.; Thursdays, 2:45-3:45 p.m.; and by appointment
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In this survey of ancient political thought, we will engage in close reading and analysis of some of the best-known texts in Western political thought, from Plato's *Republic* to Cicero's *On Duties*. At the end of the semester, we will explore two early modern texts that draw on ancient sources, including perhaps the most notorious work of the Renaissance, Machiavelli's *The Prince*. As we read, we will focus on both continuity and change in this long tradition. We will ask a series of questions: What is novel or innovative about each particular author's contributions to the study of politics? How does he build on ideas already in circulation? How can we understand these writers as common participants in a long conversation about the character of political life, a conversation that we are still having today?

To bring some focus to this broad inquiry, we will concentrate primarily on the common concepts, questions and problems that unite our readings. To take a small sample: What are the appropriate criteria for citizenship? What is justice, and how is it best achieved politically? What role does equality play in social and political relationships? What kind of moral and political judgment does common life require? How should we understand and confront power politically? What roles do violence and faction play in politics? Is there a connection between politics and a good and happy life for human beings—a strange idea to us, to be sure?

While we will certainly think about how these readings have influenced our contemporary understandings of politics, this course is also meant to encourage you to see each of these works as political and philosophically interesting in its own right and in its own time. One major aim of this course is to encourage you to judge for yourself which perspectives and arguments are persuasive or compelling to you. This is particularly challenging when reading texts that are millennia old. To help form these judgments, we will frequently return to a set of simple but hard questions: How are these thinkers like us? How are they *not* like us? Does their sameness or their difference make them more or less compelling for you, as a 21st-century reader?

Requirements and Grading

Book List:

The following books are available for purchase or rental in the bookstore or can be borrowed from the library, where they are on reserve. It's also possible that Professor Nacol has spare copies, so please ask to borrow if you find yourself in need of a copy of a reading!

- Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, ed. W.B. Stanford, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1984).
- Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- Cicero, *On Duties*, eds. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).
- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).
- Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).
- Plato, *Republic*, ed. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004).
- Plato, *Five Dialogues*, eds. G.M.A. Grube and John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).
- Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, ed. J.F. Procopé, trans. John M. Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).
- Sophocles, *Antigone, Oedipus the King and Electra*, ed. Edith Hall (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

Additional readings and resources for the course are posted on our class Blackboard site. Please acquire and use *these* editions, since class discussion will run much more smoothly if we are all using the same versions of the texts.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

This course is a combination of lecture and discussion. For each 75-minute meeting, there will be a lecture for 40-45 minutes, and we will spend rest of our time in a group discussion or doing group activities. The written assignments are primarily focused on advancing your ability to craft strong arguments and interpretations of the texts we read and discuss.

The course has five graded components:

- Class attendance and participation
 - Bring text and notes to class
 - Be an engaged listener (This means no smartphones!)
 - Participate in discussion
- 3 essays of 1800-2100 words (approx. 6-7 pages)
- Final exam

The grading breakdown is as follows:

- Class attendance and participation: 15%
- First essay: 15%
- Second Essay: 20%
- Third Essay: 25%
- Final Exam: 25%

To pass this course, you must pass each component of the course. For example, someone who writes all three essays but does not attend class regularly will receive a failing grade for class participation and will

subsequently fail the course. Likewise, someone who is an excellent contributor to class discussions but skips the final exam will fail the course.

Grading policy

We grade on a 4.0 scale, in accordance with the standard of the College of Arts and Sciences. Your final exam is the only exception. We will grade it on a 100-point scale, and your review sheet will contain a chart explaining how each grade corresponds to a value on the 4.0 scale.

Late work policy

You may take a 24-hour extension on any one of your essays this semester, no questions asked. Please indicate on your essay that you are taking the extension. You may only take the free extension once during the semester.

Regarding late work, we will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for the first day the paper is late. After that, we will deduct one full grade per day late. For example, if your essay is due on Monday at 5 p.m., anything you hand in after 5 p.m. on Monday and before 5 p.m. on Tuesday will start as an "A-;" anything you hand in after 5 p.m. on Tuesday and before 5 p.m. on Wednesday will start as a "B-;" etc. We will not accept an essay more than 4 days (96 hours) after it is due.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable, and we report suspected cases to the Undergraduate Honor Council. If you are unsure about citations or have any questions pertaining to what counts as plagiarism, please do not hesitate to email either of us or stop by office hours. For more on Vanderbilt's Honor System, see http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/chapter2.html.

More information about how to cite sources properly will be included with your essay assignments. All essays, as well as the citations of articles and books in the body of your essays, and the list of citations or references at the end of the essays, should adhere to the standard formatting guidelines provided by the political science department. These guidelines can be found on the political science department's web page, as well as on our course Blackboard site.

Laptop Policy

Unless you have a documented reason for using a laptop or tablet during class, we ask that you power down all your electronic equipment. In exchange for your respectful adherence to this policy, we will keep our use of Power Point slides to a bare minimum and repeat ourselves as often as you need so that you can take good notes by hand more easily.

Emergencies and Course Accommodations

Your success in this course is important to us. While we will enforce all policies on this syllabus strictly and fairly, we know that emergencies and illnesses sometimes arise during the semester. If you are sick or experiencing a personal emergency, please let us know **immediately** so that we can make arrangements together for you to complete your work within a reasonable period of time. In emergency cases, we will excuse late work or a series of absences if you bring a doctor's note or a note from your dean or advisor.

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with us, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated during class time, please make an appointment with Professor Nacol and/or the Opportunity Development Center (2-4705) as soon as possible.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Please bring your texts and notes to **every class**, since we will frequently work from them. Please read in advance of class. For each class meeting, we have put the total page count for assigned readings in brackets, and some assignments are longer than others. Plan accordingly!

Thursday, 08/25/2016 Introduction to the course

Crime and Punishment: Justice in *Antigone* and *Eumenides*

Tuesday, 08/30/2016 “Antigone,” in Sophocles, *Antigone, Oedipus the King and Electra*, pp. 1-45. [45]

Thursday, 09/01/2016 “Eumenides,” in Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, pp. 227-277. [50]

Socrates on Trial: Justice and Obligation in Democratic Athens

Tuesday, 09/06/2016 “Apology,” in Plato, *Five Dialogues*, pp. 21-44. [24]

Thursday, 09/08/2016 “Crito,” in Plato, *Five Dialogues*, pp. 45-57. [13]

Republic: Justice, Order, and the Critique of Athenian Democracy

Tuesday, 09/13/2016 Plato, *Republic*, Book I, pp. 1-35. [35]

Special visit from Celia Gregory, Project HeadCount, for voter registration!

Thursday, 09/15/2016 Plato, *Republic*, Book II and Book III.412b-417b, pp. 36-65, 96-102. [37]

Tuesday, 09/20/2016 Plato, *Republic*, IV.419a-423e, 427d-445e and V.449a-466d, pp. 103-108, 112-135, 136-158. [54]

Thursday, 09/22/2016 Plato, *Republic*, V.471c-VI.497c, pp. 164-191. [28]

Tuesday, 09/27/2016 Film screening: *Please Vote for Me*, dir. Wiejun Chen (2007)

Thursday, 09/29/2016 Plato, *Republic*, VI.504a-VII.521c, pp. 198-215. [18]

Tuesday, 10/04/2016 Plato, *Republic*, VIII-IX.576b, pp. 238-276. [39]

A Unity of the Different: Aristotle on Citizenship, Justice, and Equality

Thursday, 10/06/2016 Aristotle, *The Politics*, I.1-7, 12-13 and II.1-5, p. 1-12, 21-24, 25-34. [26]

Tuesday, 10/11/2016 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book III, pp. 62-96. [35]

Thursday, 10/13/2016 Fall Break. No class meeting.

- Tuesday, 10/18/2016 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, eds. C. Rowe and S. Broadie (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), Books V.1-6, VIII. 1-5, 9-11, and Book IX.6, pp. 158-168, 208-214, 218-221, and 232-233. **BLACKBOARD** [24]
- Thursday, 10/20/2016 Out of Town. No Class.
- Tuesday, 10/25/2016 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books IV.1-2, 4-12, pp. 97-100, 102-118. [21]
- Thursday, 10/27/2016 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books V.1-9 and VI.1-5, pp. 147-167, and 182-190. [29]

Dilemma-Free Politics?: Cicero's *On Duties*

- Tuesday, 11/01/2016 Cicero, *On Duties*, Book I, pp. 1-62. [62]
- Thursday, 11/03/2016 Cicero, *On Duties*, Book II, pp. 63-100. [38]
- Tuesday, 11/08/2016 Cicero, *On Duties*, Book III, pp. 101-147. [47]

Emotion and Politics: Seneca on Anger and Mercy

- Thursday, 11/10/2016 Seneca, "On Anger," Parts I, II and Preface of Part III, in *Moral and Political Essays*, pp. 17-80. [64]
- Tuesday, 11/15/2016 Seneca, "On Mercy," in *Moral and Political Essays*, pp. 119-164. [45]

The Uses and Abuses of Ancient Thought: More and Machiavelli

- Thursday, 11/17/2016 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory letter and ch. 1-14, pp. 3-53. [50]
- Tuesday, 11/22/2016 Thanksgiving Break. No class.
- Thursday, 11/24/2016 Happy Thanksgiving! No class.
- Tuesday, 11/29/2016 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 15-26, pp. 54-92. [38]
- Thursday, 12/01/2016 More, *Utopia*, Book I, pp. 56-89. [33]
- Tuesday, 12/06/2016 More, *Utopia*, Book II, pp. 90-160. [70]
- Thursday, 12/08/2016 Exam review session.

Important Dates:

- First essay:** Tuesday, 10/11/2016, in class
- Second essay:** Tuesday, 11/08/2016, in class
- Third Essay:** Tuesday, 12/06/2016, in class
- Final Exam:** Wednesday, 12/14/2016, 9-11 a.m.
or
Saturday, 12/17/2016, 12-2 p.m.