

## POSC 160: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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Willis 416  
x4111

Fall 2010  
Office hours: Thurs. 3-5, Fri. 11-1,  
and by appt.

### I. Purpose and Scope

In this course we will examine the development of Western political thought through a careful reading of several classic texts spanning more than two millennia. We will begin at the beginning (of political philosophy)—that is, with Socrates, as he is presented by both Plato and Aristophanes—and then consider ancient political philosophy as presented by Aristotle, its most straightforward practitioner. Notwithstanding the tremendous political and cultural changes of the intervening centuries, it was not until the appearance of Machiavelli that the philosophic reign of the ancient Greeks was decisively ended, and so we will proceed next to Machiavelli and Hobbes, founders of the modern age whose revolutionary works not only broke with the old but also sought—with success—to remake the world in the most concrete, practical terms. The success of these early modern thinkers provoked a still ongoing series of critical reactions: perhaps the chief theme of late modern and post-modern political philosophy has been discontent with what the early moderns wrought, especially liberalism. Foremost among modernity's and liberalism's critics, in terms of the span of his legacy as well as the penetration of his analysis, was our next author, Rousseau, whose critique has exerted great influence on revolutionary thought on both the Left and the Right to the present day. But Rousseau's influence was not limited to liberalism's enemies. It is also seen in some of liberalism's sober friends, such as Tocqueville. In Tocqueville we find a defender of liberalism who learned from liberalism's critics, and a modern who was animated by insights of the ancients. He is therefore a fitting thinker with whom to conclude our survey.

Since the works to be read are often difficult and subtle, you should be sure to give them the time and attention they require. It is very important that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. For additional help with the reading, you may consult the appropriate chapters of *History of Political Philosophy*, edited by Strauss and Cropsey, which has been placed on closed reserve in the library. I encourage you, however, to read the texts carefully on your own before consulting any secondary works.

### II. Course Requirements

You should read the assigned texts **carefully** and **before class**. Grades will be based on two papers (each counting for 25% of your grade), a take-home final exam (40%), and class participation (10%). Paper assignments will be passed out over the course of the term. I may also give unannounced quizzes from time to time.

### III. Academic Honesty

Strict standards of academic integrity will be upheld in this class. Your submission of written

work means that your work is your own, that it is in accord with Carleton's regulations on academic integrity (it is your responsibility to read "Academic Honesty in the Writing of Essays and Other Papers"), and that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid. Students who are found to have violated these standards should expect severe sanctions.

#### **IV. Assigned Texts**

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore:

Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates* (trans. West and West)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. Ostwald)

Aristotle, *The Politics* (trans. Lord)

Machiavelli, *The Prince* (trans. Mansfield)

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses* (trans. Masters)

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (ed. Kessler, trans. Grant)

#### **V. Class Schedule**

Note that this is an *approximate* schedule. We are likely to depart from it as class discussions, etc. so require. Adjustments will be announced in class, typically at the end of the class period.

September 13: Introduction

##### **I. Ancient Political Philosophy**

###### **A. Politics and Unreason: The Problem of Socrates**

September 15: Aristophanes, *Clouds* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

September 17: Plato, *Apology of Socrates* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

September 20: Plato, *Crito* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

###### **B. Reconciling Politics and Reason: Aristotle**

September 22: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book One, and *Politics*, Book One, chapters 1-2

September 24: No class

September 27: Review previous reading

September 29: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books Two and Three

October 1: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book Five, chapters 1-7; Book Six, chapters 5-8 and 12-13, and Book Ten, chapters 6-9

October 4: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book One

October 6: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book Two, chapters 1-5 and 7-8

October 8: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book Three

October 11: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book Four, chapters 1-12; Book Five, chapters 1-4, 8-9, 11-12; and Book Six, chapter 2

## **II. The Modern Departure**

### **A. Machiavelli and the Launching of Modernity**

October 13: Machiavelli, Dedicatory Letter and chapters 1-11

October 15: Machiavelli, chapters 12-19

October 18: Mid-term break

October 20: Machiavelli, chapters 20-26

October 22: Review previous reading

### **B. Modern Liberalism**

October 25: Hobbes, Introduction (*his* intro., not the editor's) and chapters 11 and 13-15

October 27: Hobbes, chapters 17-18, 19 (first 7 paragraphs only), 21 and 29

October 29: Review Hobbes reading

## **III. Second Thoughts About Modernity**

### **A. Rousseau's Radical Critique**

November 1: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Dedication to Geneva, Preface, and Part One

November 3: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Part Two

November 5: Review *Second Discourse*

## **B. Tocqueville's Sympathetic Critique: Saving Liberal Democracy from Itself**

November 8: Tocqueville, pp. 1-15 and 34-44

November 10: Tocqueville, pp. 102-46

November 12: Tocqueville, pp. 169-78, 201-214, 219-39, (recommended: 239-48), 268-70 and 281-86 (recommended: 270-81)

November 15: Tocqueville, pp. 297-319

November 17: Conclusion

### **VI. Due dates**

Papers are due in my office by 4:00 PM of the day indicated:

First paper due Thursday, October 7

Second paper due Thursday, November 4

Take-home final exam due Monday, November 22