

POSC 160

Political Philosophy

Fall 2012

Class Hours: MW 9:50AM- 11:00AM, F 9:40AM-10:40AM

Classroom: Willis 203

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Office: Willis 418

Office Hours: MW: 3:00 PM-5:00 PM or by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will explore and discuss ancient and modern responses to questions such as: What are the nature, the causes, and the effects of good government? How far are people able to influence the regimes that govern them? Can political philosophy help us identify the best form of government? What are the qualities of a good citizen? Who should rule? What are the qualities of a good ruler? How should political change occur: by reform or by revolution? Is democracy the best form of government? What is liberty? Why is liberty politically and morally relevant? What is the relationship between history and politics?

In answering these questions we will understand the differences between ancient and modern political philosophy. We will also understand how modern political philosophers differed from each other in the way they theorized about politics and its relationship with moral, socio-economic, and cultural aspects.

Course objectives

To understand what political philosophy is: what are its main concerns and its specific method;

To grasp the foundations of Western political philosophy, as set by Greek political philosophy, particularly, by Plato and Aristotle;

To learn about the specific concerns and ideas of ancient and, respectively, of modern political philosophy;

To understand the differences (and the similarities) between ancient and modern political philosophy;

To know some of the differences between modern approaches to politics;

To become better readers, thinkers, speakers, and writers

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the specific nature of political philosophy, particularly, of ancient and modern political philosophy by carefully and closely reading the following books:

Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, ISBN: 9780393314677

Aristotle, *Politics*, translated and with an introduction, notes, and glossary by Carnes Lord, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984, ISBN: 9780226026695

Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, ISBN: 9780521567978

Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, translated by David Marsh, Penguin Books, 1999, ISBN: 9780140435696
Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Penguin Books, London, 2004, ISBN: 9780140432046
Im. Kant, *Political Writings*, translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 2000, ISBN: 9780521398374

Course Requirements:

Five short (two page) essays on the following topics (**10% each**):

- (i) Present Plato's argument for the best form of government and then provide one reason for which you agree with him and one reason for which you disagree (due on **September 25**, a hard copy should be dropped in the box outside my office).
- (ii) Present Aristotle's conception of political reform and then provide two reasons for which Aristotle disagrees with Plato on this issue (due on **October 9**, a hard copy should be dropped in the box outside my office).
- (iii) Present Hobbes' argument about good government and then provide two reasons for which his argument is different from that of Plato and Aristotle (due on **October 23**, a hard copy should be dropped in the box outside my office).
- (iv) Plato bans the poets from his ideal city-state. Vico considers poetry to be essential to the moral improvement of mankind. Shortly present their arguments, then chose one side and criticize it by relying on the argument advanced by the opponent (due on **November 2**, a hard copy should be dropped in the box outside my office).
- (v) Present Burke's argument against the French Revolution. Then, relying on Kant's conception of history and of the role of human reason and freedom in the advancement of human societies, show the limitations of the case made by Burke against the French Revolution (due **November 13**, a hard copy should be dropped in the box outside my office).

Final Take-Home Exam(35%)

Active and informed class participation. This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; (iii) in class quizzes; and (iv) in class assignments that will test your degree of familiarization with and understanding of the reading that you were requested to prepare for the current day (**15%**).

What is Expected from the Students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. That

means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

September 10: *Introduction: What is Political Philosophy? Why Study Political Philosophy? How to Study Political Philosophy?*

September 12: *Justice: the just soul and the just city*
Reading: Plato, Republic, Book I and II

September 14: *Politics and education: the education of the guardians*
Reading: Plato, Republic, Book III and Book IV

September 17: *Political virtues and political life in the just city: property, family, and the education of the philosopher*
Reading: Plato, Republic, Book V, Book VI, and Book VII (514a-521c)

September 19: *The decay of the city: types of political regimes (the critique of democracy)*
Reading: Plato, Republic, Book VIII

September 21: *The enemies of justice: the tyrant and the poets (orators included)*
Reading: Plato, Republic, Book IX and Book X

September 24: *The place and role of political partnership in the human life*
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 1

September 26: *Citizenship, qualifications for citizenship: the difference between the good citizen and the good man*
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 3, Chapters 1-13, 18

September 28: *The nature of the political regime, types of political regimes, and the stability of political regimes*
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 4, Chapters 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, Book 5, chapters 1-3, 5-8

October 1: *The best (practicable) political regime*
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 4, Chapters 8, 9, 11, Book 7, chapters 1-3, 7, 13-15

October 3: *Hobbes: Rethinking the Foundations of Politics*
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction

October 5: *Speech, Reason, and Power*
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part One, Chapters I, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, viii, x, and xi

October 8: *The natural condition of man: natural law and natural rights*
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part One, Chapters xiii, xiv, xv, and xvi

October 10: *The commonwealth*
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part Two, Chapters xvii, xviii, xix, xxi

October 12: *No Class* (I will attend the Annual Conference of the Association of Political Theory, where I will present a paper on Vico and Arendt)

October 15: **Mid-term break**

October 17: *Vico's Idea of Political Science, Its Elements, and Principles*
Reading: Vico, New Science, pages 75-118

October 19: *Poetic Logic, Imagination, and Politics*
Reading, Vico, New Science, pages 144-188 and 194-206

October 22: *The natural Condition of Man and the Origin of the Commonwealth*
Reading: Vico, New Science, pages 207-224, 236-242, and 252-263

October 24: *The course of history and the Laws of the Nations*
Reading, Vico, New Science, pages 264-305, 395-413, 448-458, and 483-491

October 26: *Burke and the main tenets of European Conservatism*

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pages 85-122

October 29: *Burke on politics and political change*

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pages 123-145 and 149-154

October 31: *Burke on corporate groups and their role in politics*

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pages 183-200 and 242-306

November 2: *Introduction to Kant: Enlightenment and Politics*

Reading: Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*

November 5: *Human nature, History, and Reason*

Reading: Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*

November 7: *Prophetic History and Human Freedom*

Reading: Kant, *The Contest of Faculties*

November 9: *Politics and Reason*

Reading: Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, Pages 93-115

November 12: *Politics and Reason*

Reading: Kant, Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, Pages 116-130

November 14: *Final review*