

POSC 160: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Professor Laurence Cooper
Willis 416
12:30
X4111

Spring 2016
Office hours: T 9:30-
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. One concrete result of modern political philosophy was the appearance of such liberal regimes as our own, and in order to understand the nature of that regime and some of its key presuppositions we will turn next to Locke, whose influence on the American Declaration of Independence will quickly become apparent. 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, and that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid. Be sure you are familiar with Carleton's principles and policies on Academic Honesty: if you haven't done so already, review the website found at <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/>. I take academic honesty very seriously: 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, *The Politics* (trans. Lord)

Machiavelli, *The Prince* (trans. Mansfield)

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

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.

Please note: there are three days on which we won't meet owing to my conference travel: April 1, April 4, and April 8. I have scheduled make-up classes on Sunday, April 24 and Sunday, May 8. (See below.) *Please be sure add these make-up classes to your schedules.*

March 28: Introduction

PART ONE: ANCIENT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

A. Politics and Unreason: The Problem of Socrates

March 30: Plato, *Apology of Socrates* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

April 1: No class; rescheduled for 5:00 pm Sunday, April 24—see below

April 4: No class; rescheduled for 5:00 pm Sunday, May 8—see below

April 6: Aristophanes, *Clouds* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

April 8: No class

April 11: Plato, *Crito* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

April 13: The Problem of Socrates—review all three previous readings

B. Reconciling Politics and Reason: Aristotle

April 15: Aristotle, Book I, Chapters 1-2

April 18: Review previous reading

April 20: Aristotle, Book I, remainder

April 22: Aristotle, Book II, Chapters 1-5 and 7-8

April 24: ****first Sunday make-up session****—5:00-7:00 pm, Weitz 132: Aristotle, Book III

April 25: Aristotle, Book IV, Chapters 1-12; Book V, Chapters 1-4, 8-9, 11-12; and Book VI, Chapter 2

April 27: Aristotle, Book VII

PART TWO: THE MODERN DEPARTURE

A. Machiavelli and the Launching of Modernity

April 29: Machiavelli, Dedicatory Letter and Chapters 1-11

May 2: Mid-term break

May 4: Machiavelli, Chapters 12-19

May 6: Machiavelli, Chapters 20-26

May 8: ****second Sunday make-up session****—5:00-7:00 pm, Weitz 132: What Machiavelli wrought—no additional reading

B. The Foundations of Modern Liberalism

May 9: Hobbes, Introduction (*his* intro., not the editor's) and Chapters 11 and 13-15

May 11: Hobbes, Chapters 17-18, 19 (first 7 paragraphs only), 21 and 29

May 13: Review Hobbes reading

May 16: From Hobbes to (the) US: excerpts from Locke (TBA) and the American Declaration of Independence, *if there is time*

PART THREE: SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT MODERNITY

A. Rousseau's Radical Critique

May 18: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Dedication to Geneva, Preface, and Part One

May 20: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Part Two

May 23: Review *Second Discourse*

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

May 25: Tocqueville, pp. 1-15 and 34-44

May 27: Tocqueville, pp. 102-46

May 30: Tocqueville, pp. 169-78, 201-214, 219-39, (recommended: 239-48), 268-70 and 281-86 (recommended: 270-81)

June 1: Tocqueville, pp. 297-319

VI. Due dates

Papers should be submitted via email <lcooper@carleton.edu> as Word attachments. Be sure to begin the file name with your last name.

First paper due Thursday, April 28, 5:00 PM.

Second paper due Thursday, May 19, 5:00 PM

Take-home final exam due Monday, June 6, 9:30 PM