

GOVERNMENT 6: POLITICAL IDEAS

Department of Government
Dartmouth College
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Office Hours: T: 10 to
12; TH 8-10; or by
Appointment.

DESCRIPTION: Political Ideas introduces students to the foundational concepts, ideals and debates of human political life. In the writings of these philosophers from Plato to Mill, we shall find the most profound and insightful discussions anywhere of the central political ideals of justice, power, law, liberty, equality, democracy, socialism, capitalism, property, virtue and happiness. Actual politics is largely a struggle over the meaning of these basic ideals and we cannot understand politics without understanding the long-standing debates over them.

COURSE AIMS: 1) To gain a deeper understanding of politics by reading and discussing the classic works of political philosophy; 2) To learn how a philosophical approach to politics differs from a scientific or an ideological approach to politics; 3) To learn how to evaluate complex arguments about politics; 4) to learn how to construct oral and written arguments about politics; 5) To develop the life-long disposition to evaluate the arguments made by politicians and activists in the light of classic philosophical arguments.

LEARNING GOALS: Students who actively apply themselves to this course's readings, activities, debates, and assignments will become competent readers of the most brilliant and demanding texts in the history of political thought. In particular, you will be able to answer three kinds of questions about these texts. What did the text mean to its author? What does the text mean to us? What does the text mean for knowledge and truth?

1. Questions of Exegesis: What did the original author mean by this argument, in the context of his own book? You will be able to explicate accurately any selected passage from these classic texts.
2. Questions of Application: How does this classic idea or argument apply to your life and to our contemporary moral and political debates? You will be able to apply the central arguments of these political philosophers to the moral and political issues important to you and to our current world.
3. Questions of Evaluation: Does this classic argument make sense?

Is it a sound argument? You will be able to argue intelligently with our classic authors, by revealing the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

PEDAGOGY: The teaching methods of this course are all designed to promote the learning goals listed above. Research demonstrates that we all learn only by doing. Hence, the person who learns the most from lecturing is the lecturer: so I will keep lecturing to a bare minimum. Students learn more by reading lectures than by listening to them, so I have posted both the lectures and outlines to the lectures on Blackboard. We shall devote each class period to activities that will reinforce and consolidate what you learn from reading the classic texts and from reading my lectures. So, instead of passively listening to me, during each class period you will be actively discussing readings and lectures, debating the issues, writing about the key arguments, and collaborating with your classmates. Our class meetings will be occupied with active mastery of the questions of exegesis, application, and evaluation that we pose to each thinker we study. All learning, therefore, depends upon your daily preparation for each class period. In this active setting, you can run, but you cannot hide.

REQUIREMENTS: All the requirements of this course are designed to promote the learning goals listed above: 1) To read the assigned texts and lectures in advance of the class meeting in which we shall discuss them. 2) To attend every class meeting. 3) To post responses to each day's reading assignments on Blackboard before the class in which we discuss it. 4) To write in-class response papers. 5) To write three short papers, each on a different philosopher: an exegesis of a philosopher, an application of a philosopher to your own life, an evaluation of a philosopher. Class participation (attendance, discussions in class, posts to the reading forums, blogs, and debates) will count for about 25%; each short essay will count for about 25%.

STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS:

I am sincerely committed to having every single student excel in this course: I have no interest in merely sorting students. The best way to achieve the learning goals of the course is to alternate reading new material with active discussion, questioning, and writing as a way to consolidate what you learn from reading. For each philosopher here is a good approach: First, read the relevant chapter in Arnhart; second, read the text of the philosopher assigned in Morgan; third, read my Lecture Outline and my Lecture on Blackboard; fourth, read my Study Questions posted on Blackboard and discuss them with a friend in the class; fifth, prepare your daily questions about the assigned readings.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Note to Students: Even though many of the classic works we shall be reading and discussing in this course can be found on-line, I am requiring you to purchase the Morgan anthology for two reasons: First, the translations of these texts are better than those found on-line. Second, it is important for our discussions, debates, and papers that we all be on the same page, using the same edition of these works. You will find the Arnhart book to be a very valuable guide to the key ideas in the readings.

1) Classics of Moral and Political Theory, ed. Michael L. Morgan, fourth edition (Hackett, 2005).

2) Political Questions, by Larry Arnhart, Third Edition (Waveland Press, 2003).

All books available for purchase at Wheelock Books and the Dartmouth Bookstore.

WRITING TUTORIALS:

For individual peer tutorial assistance with writing, research, and multimedia projects, students may use RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. To make appointments go to RWIT's appointment scheduler at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit>, or drop by the Center in 183 Baker-Berry Library, Level One (next to the Reference area) from 4 to 6 pm and 7 to 10 pm, Sundays through Thursdays.

DISABILITIES POLICY: Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me, ideally, before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

PRIZE: The Andrew Warden Edson Memorial Prize of \$100 may be awarded to one or two students who, in the judgment of the instructor, perform superlatively well in the course. This prize derives from the gift of Mrs. Jean Slater Edson in memory of her husband, who was a Dartmouth graduate in the Class of 1925.

SCHEDULE

September 16: Introduction: What is Politics? What is Philosophy?

Reading: Lecture 1 (all Lectures on Blackboard).

Part One: Politics of the City-State (Kallipolis).

17 (X-Hour, Noon): **Philosophy Versus Politics.**

Readings: Plato, Apology and Crito (all primary texts in Morgan).
Arnhart, Political Questions, chap 1 (parts relevant).

Debate: Was Socrates Rightly Executed?

18: **What is Justice?**

Readings: Plato, Republic, Book I.
Arnhart, Political Questions, chap. 1.
Lecture 2.

20: **City and Soul.**

Readings: Plato, Republic, Books II-III.
Lecture 3.

23: Readings: Plato, Republic, Books IV and V.
Lecture 3.

Debate: Is Plato a Feminist?

24 (X-Hour) **Close Reading of Ship of State Simile (Republic 488-489).**

Reading: Plato, Republic, Book VI (only 484-489).

25: ***Writing Workshop: Exegesis.***

27: **Learning to Think Like Aristotle.**

Readings: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I.

September 30: The Household and the Polis.

Readings: Aristotle, Politics, Book I.
 Arnhart, chap. 2.
 Lecture 6.

October 1 (X-Hour): Aristotle's Critique of Plato.

Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book II, chaps. 1-5.

Debate: Is Aristotle Fair to Plato?

2: Aristotle on Citizens and Constitutions.

Readings: Aristotle, Politics, Book III.
 Lecture 7.

Debate: Does Aristotle Favor Democracy?

Paper One: Exegesis (Due On Blackboard 9AM).

Part Two: The Politics of the Human Community (Cosmopolis).

4: An Augustinian Critique of Plato.

Readings: Arnhart, chap. 3.
 Lecture 8.

7: The Two Cities in St. Augustine.

Readings: Augustine, City of God, Book XIX.
 Lecture 9.

Debate: Is Government More than Organized Crime?

October 8 (X-Hour): ***Writing Workshop: Application.***

9: **Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas.**

Readings: Arnhart, chap. 4
Lecture 10

11: **The Nature of Law.**

Readings: Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Questions 90, 91, 94.

14 : **Debate: Was the War in Iraq a Just War?**

Readings: Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Questions 40, 42, 66.
Lecture 11.

Part Three: The Politics of the Nation-State.

15 (X-Hour): **Power, Glory, and Political Ambition.**

Readings: Machiavelli, The Prince.
Arnhart, chap. 5.
Lecture 12.

16: **The Imperial Republic.**

Readings: Machiavelli, Prince.
Lecture 12.

18: **Debate: Is Machiavelli a Teacher of Evil?**

Paper Two: Application (Due on Blackboard 9 AM).

21: **From Natural Law to Natural Rights: Government by Consent**

Readings: Locke, Second Treatise.
Arnhart, chap.8.
Lecture 14.

Debate: Are all men created equal?

October 22 (X-Hour): ***Writing Workshop: Evaluation.***

23: **Locke on Property.**

Readings: Locke, Second Treatise, chap. 5.
Lecture 15.

25: **Liberty and Equality.**

Readings: Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Books I-II.
Arnhart, chap. 9.
Lecture 16.

28: **Bourgeois versus Citoyen.**

Reading: Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Books III-IV.

Debate: Does American Society Reflect the General Will?

29 (X Hour): **Civil Society and the State in Marx.**

Readings: Marx, On the Jewish Question.
Lecture 17.

Paper Three: Evaluation (Due on Blackboard 9 AM).

October 30 and Nov. 1: Class Cancelled. Halloween!

November 4: The Dialectics of History.

Readings: Marx, Alienated Labor and Manifesto of the Communist Party.
Arnhart, chap. 11.
Lecture 18.

6: **Debate: Did Marx Favor Capitalism?**

8: **From a Free Society to Freedom from Society.**

Readings: Mill, On Liberty, chaps. 1-2.
Lecture 19.

November 11: Debate: Would Mill just say No to drugs?

Reading: Mill, On Liberty, chaps. 3-5.

13: **Surprise Activity!**

All Revised Essays Due on Blackboard 9 AM.

November 15 and 18: Class Canceled.