

Political Ideas

Government 6 Dartmouth College Winter, 2013

Tuesday/Thursday
10:00-11:50 A.M.
X-hour: Wednesday, 3:00-3:50 P.M.

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Office Hours: Thursday,
8:30-9:30 A.M., and
4:00-5:00 P.M.

Course Description

Students in this course read great works in political theory, chart the development of Western political thought, and undertake to examine fundamental problems of politics. The course covers thinkers ranging from Socrates to John Stuart Mill, aiming to identify and analyze profound political issues that the theorists raise.

The objectives of Govt. 6 are threefold. First, the lectures and class discussions will work to foster an understanding of the ideas and arguments of each of the thinkers covered in the course. Second, the course prompts students to explore the historical contexts in which the respective authors produced their texts, and to consider ways in which later authors may have built upon the ideas of their predecessors. Third, and most importantly, students will be invited to think carefully and seriously about the deep questions with which great political philosophers were concerned. This is the most important objective of Govt. 6: to develop students' considered assessments of weighty political questions.

The rewards can be great for such endeavors, but beware: the risks are high! For, as a student in the course, you will need to devote your mental energies to the consideration of complex problems. You will have to be prepared both to ponder and to see where your deliberations lead. Govt. 6 demands exertion of its students, so it is not a course for the faint of heart. However, you will have a chance to engage the arguments and ideas of great political theorists, to discuss those ideas with colleagues, and possibly to make headway on questions at the heart of political theory. With this in view, you may find that Govt. 6 holds exciting prospects for you.

We will consider a series of questions raised in the readings, including the following: What binds a person to the laws of a polity? How can one determine the dictates of justice? What is freedom? What political offices and institutions should we have, and how should they be organized? What is the purpose of political institutions, anyway? Who should occupy positions of political authority, and how should they rule? Is there something about the nature of law that should direct us in thinking about these matters? In Govt. 6, you will have a chance to pick out some of these

questions (or identify others) and do some serious contemplation about them, in light of the texts that we examine.

Required Readings

There will be one required text for Govt. 6. It is as follows:

Classics of Moral and Political Theory, 5th edition, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011). [ISBN: 978-7-60384-442-0]

This text has been ordered, and should be available for purchase at Wheelock Books. All of the readings for Govt. 6 are contained in *Classics of Moral and Political Theory*.

Format

Govt. 6 is not simply a lecture course, since lectures will be joined by in-class discussion in which you are invited to participate. Normally, there will be a period of lecturing at the outset of each class, following which the floor will be opened to discussion. Classes will focus on specific readings (described below in the course schedule), with different works examined in each successive week. There is a good deal of involved reading in Govt. 6, but it is crucial that you come prepared so that you can make use of the lectures and the discussions with your cohort. Please also bring *Classics of Moral and Political Theory* with you to class, since we will frequently refer to passages in the texts that it includes. If there are changes to be made to the syllabus, or adjustments of other kinds, they will be announced in class.

Grading

Students' grades will be comprised of the following four components:

1. Sixty-minute exam	25%	(covers weeks 1 to 4)
2. Seven-page paper	30%	(covers weeks 5 to 7)
3. Final exam	35%	(cumulative)
4. Class participation	<u>10%</u>	
	100%	

Late papers will not be accepted, and make-up exams will not be granted, without sufficient reason and advance notice. Students are expected to understand and follow the Academic Honor Principle of Dartmouth College in pursuing studies for this course. Students with any disabilities

requiring special arrangements are encouraged to see the instructor by January 18, in order to arrange appropriate accommodation.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Apology and Crito (Total Reading: 26 pp.)

- January 8: • Introduction
 • Plato, *Apology*, 17a-35e (Morgan, pp. 46-59)
- January 10: • Plato, *Apology*, 36a-42a (Morgan, pp. 59-63)
 • Plato, *Crito*, 43a-54e (entire) (Morgan, pp. 64-71)

Week 2: Plato's Republic (Total Reading: 177 pp.)

- January 15: • Plato, *Republic*, Books I-IV (327a-445e) (Morgan, pp. 75-147)
- January 17: • Plato, *Republic*, Books V-X (449a-621c) (Morgan, pp. 147-251)

Week 3: Aristotle and Aquinas (Total Reading: 89 pp.)

- January 22: • Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapter 1, to Book VIII, Chapter 3 (1252a-1338b)
 (Morgan, pp. 361-419)
- January 24: • St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship*, Book I, Chapter 1 (Morgan, pp. 460-62)
 • St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (all selections) (Morgan, pp. 463-89)

Week 4: Machiavelli (Total Reading: 48 pp.)

- January 29: • Machiavelli, *Letter to Francesco Vettori* (Morgan, pp. 506-08)
 • Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 1-26 (entire) (Morgan, pp. 509-53)
- January 31: ***In-class exam on Weeks 1-4***

Week 5: Hobbes (Total Reading: 131 pp.)

- February 5: • Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedication; Introduction; Part I (Chapters 1-16) (Morgan, pp. 578-633)
- February 7: • Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II (chapters 17-31); Review and Conclusion (Morgan, pp. 633-708)
 Paper topic announced; due Thursday, February 21

