

Department of Government  
Dartmouth College  
Winter 2011  
M, W, F 11:15 to 12:20  
T (X-Hour): Noon to 12:50.

Professor James B. Murphy  
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## Government 63: Origins of Political Thought

**DESCRIPTION:** Government 63 is a study in the foundations of modern political thought. Our modern Westernized world is the product of two ancient traditions: Hellenism and Hebraism, Athens and Jerusalem. Hebraic political thought will be represented in the Bible (selections) and Hellenic political thought will be represented in Aristotle's Politics. We shall then explore two medieval attempts to synthesize Hebraism and Hellenism: the work of Augustine and of Aquinas. In these ancient and medieval sources, we shall find the foundations of our modern debates about liberty, equality, slavery, socialism, religion, war, pacifism, property, virtue and happiness. Finally, we shall consider some contemporary attempts to apply these ancient ideas to modern American debates about capitalism and about war.

**COURSE AIMS:** 1) To gain a deeper understanding of politics by reading and discussing the foundational works of political thought; 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 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, making oral presentations, 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 by 6 AM before the class in which we discuss it. 4) To write in-class response papers. 5) To make a formal oral presentation in class. 6) To write three short papers, each on a different text: an exegesis of a text, an application of a text to your own life, an evaluation of a text. Class participation (attendance, discussions in class, posts to the reading forums, blogs, and debates) will count for about 15%; each short essay will count for about 25%; the oral presentation will count for about 10%.

**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 day here is a good approach: First, read the assigned lecture; second, read the assigned primary text; third, read my Study Questions posted on Blackboard and discuss them with a friend in the class; fourth select your text and write your daily reading response blog.

## 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 books listed below 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. All other assigned readings can be found on Blackboard.

- 1) The Politics of Aristotle, trans. Ernest Barker.
- 2) The City of God, by Saint Augustine, edited by Vernon Bourke.
- 3) On Law, Morality, and Politics by Thomas Aquinas, edited by Baumgarth and Regan.

**All books available for purchase at Wheelock Books.**

## 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.

## Schedule

### Part One: Ancient Political Theory: Athens or Jerusalem?

#### Athens: Aristotle's Politics.

- January 7:** What is ancient and medieval political thought?  
Reading: Lecture 1.
- 8 (X-Hour): How to think like Aristotle: teleological method in politics.  
Reading: "Introduction" in The Politics of Aristotle.
- 9: Aristotelian Economics.  
Reading: Lecture 3.  
The Politics of Aristotle, Book I.
- 11: Aristotle's Critique of Plato's Communism in the Republic.  
Reading: Lecture 4.  
The Politics of Aristotle, Book II, chaps. 1-5.
- 14: What is a Citizen and What is a Constitution?  
Reading: Lecture 5.  
The Politics of Aristotle, Book III, chaps. 1-5.
- 15 (X-Hour): Class Struggle and Distributive Justice.  
Reading: The Politics of Aristotle, Book III, chaps. 6-18.
- 16: The Best Practical Regimes.  
Reading: Lecture 6.  
The Politics of Aristotle, Books IV and VI.
- 18: The Causes of Revolution.  
Reading: The Politics of Aristotle, Book V.
- 21: Class Cancelled: Martin Luther King Holiday.**
- 22 (X-Hour): The Best Way of Life:  
Reading: Lecture 7.  
The Politics of Aristotle, Books VII - VIII.  
**Exegesis Essay Due on Blackboard by 9 AM.**

### **Jerusalem: The Bible**

- Jan. 23:** Biblical Politics: Kingship, Prophecy, and Law in the Hebrew Bible.  
Readings: Lecture 9.  
1 Samuel 8-12; 2 Samuel 12; Psalm 119.
- 25: Biblical Politics: God and Caesar in the Gospels.  
Readings: Lecture 10.  
Matthew, chaps. 5, 19, 20, 22.
- 28: Biblical Politics: Mosaic Law and the Law of Love in St. Paul.  
Readings: Lecture 11.  
Romans, chaps. 1-3, 7, 13.

### **Part Two: The Medieval Synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem.**

#### **St. Augustine: Athens or Jerusalem.**

- 29 (X-Hour): Augustine's Critique of Paganism.  
Reading: Lectures 12 and 13.  
City of God, Books 1 and 2.

#### **Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 4, 6: Class Canceled: Professor Away.**

- Feb. 8: **Class Cancelled: Carnival.**  
**Application Essay Due on Blackboard by 9 AM.**
- 11: Divine vs. Human Justice.  
Reading: City of God, Books 4 and 5.
- 12 (X-Hour): The origins of evil and the Two Cities. Reading: City of God, Books 14 and 18.
- 13: Philosophy, Christianity, and Human Happiness.  
Reading: Lectures 14 and 15.  
City of God, Book 19.
- 15: Augustine on the Just War.  
Readings: Lecture 16.  
Augustine, Political Writings,

#### **St. Thomas Aquinas: Athens and Jerusalem.**

- February 18: Nature and Grace in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.  
Reading: Lecture 17.
- 19 (X-Hour): The Essence of Law.  
Readings: Lecture 18.  
On Law, Morality, and Politics, Q. 90-91.
- 20: Varieties of Law. Readings: On Law, Morality, and Politics, Q. 93 and 94.
- 22: Of Human Law. Readings: On Law, Morality, and Politics, Q. 95-97.
- 25: Of Right and Justice.  
Readings: Lecture 19.  
On Law, Morality, and Politics, Q. 57, 58, 61.
- 26 (X-Hour): Of Property.  
Readings: Lecture 20.  
On Law, Morality, and Politics, Q. 66, 71, 77, 78.
- 27: War and Killing.  
Readings: Lecture 21.  
On Law, Morality, and Politics, Chap. 5. On Homicide on Blackboard.  
**Evaluation Essay Due on Blackboard by 9 AM.**
- March 1:** Of Sedition and Obedience.  
Readings: On Law, Morality, and Politics, Chap. 6 and Tolerance and Church-State Relations.  
Reading: On Law, Morality, and Politics, Chap. 7.

### **Part Three: Contemporary Thomism in Action**

- 4: **Economic Justice for All :**  
**Reading: On Blackboard**
- 6: **Challenge of Peace:**  
**Reading: On Blackboard.**
- 8: **Class Canceled. Revised Essays Due on Blackboard by 9 AM.**