



Library of Congress image from "The Life of Socrates," 1750
url: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Socrates_standing_before_seated_group_of_men;_figure_of_Justice_stands_behind_him_LCCN2002737397.jpg

**The Classical Quest for Justice
The University of Texas at Austin
GOV 351C / CTI 320
Fall 2023**

**Professor Abigail Staysa
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Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 11
Classroom: PAR 204

Office: Littlefield Home
Office Hours: Thursdays 11 – 2
or by appointment

Course Description

It is obvious that a concern for justice affects our expectations of one another and our obligations to others. It also lies at the foundation of our thinking about governmental policies and our hopes for political society. And yet, despite of our continued concern for justice, we seldom pause to reflect on its nature. What is justice? What does it require of individuals and political communities? In this course, we will focus on these and other fundamental questions of political philosophy through a careful study of seminal texts of the ancient world. Beginning with Sophocles' *Antigone*, we will attempt to think through the questions of justice, civic and familial obligation, nobility, mortality, and the relationship of the human to the divine, and to understand Sophocles' artful and complex presentation of the deepest puzzles connected with those themes. We will then read Xenophon's *Regime of the Lacedaemonians* and Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* to examine one legislator's attempt to attain perfect justice in a city through institutional and educational reforms aimed at total devotion to the common good, and to appreciate the authors' ironic treatment and subtle criticisms of that regime. Turning then to Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Plato's *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Politics*, our focus will be on the philosophers' approaches to the question of justice, the problematic relationship of the philosopher to the political community, the meaning of philosophy as a way of life, and its need for a political defense.

Prerequisites

Completion of at least thirty semester hours of coursework.

Books

Please purchase the specific editions of the book assigned for this class and always bring the book we are discussing to class. Chapters from sources marked with an asterisk (*) will be made available on Canvas and so do not need to be purchased. Please print out a hard copy of each pdf on Canvas and always bring them to class.

1. *Sophocles, *The Theban Plays*, trans. Peter Ahrens Dorf and Thomas Pangle, Cornell University Press.
2. *Xenophon, *The Shorter Writings*, Ed. Gregory McBrayer, Cornell University Press.
3. *Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, trans. Dryden, Random House Publishing. Available online for free—<https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/dryden-plutarch-s-lives-dryden-trans>.
4. *Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*, trans. West and West, Cornell University Press.
5. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom, Basic Books.
6. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, Chicago University Press.

Learning Outcomes

The most important learning goal is to develop skills in interpreting texts of political philosophy through close readings and focused discussion. Other learning goals include fostering a collaborative, respectful, and engaging discussion environment and cultivating your ability to communicate clearly and well, both orally and in your written work. Your progress will be assessed by your performance on three take-home exams throughout the semester and by the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussions.

Course Requirements

25%	First Exam (Canvas)
25%	Second Exam (Canvas)
30%	Final Exam (Canvas)
20%	Participation & Attendance

Take Home Exams: There will be three exams designed to enhance and test your understanding of the material for this course. All three will be take-home exams, consisting of true and false, short answer, and two or three essay responses. The first and second exams will focus on the material from the first and second parts of the semester. The final exam will be cumulative, but slightly weighted toward the final section of the course.

Participation & Attendance: Class participation is determined by your attendance and contributions to class discussions. In addition to the notebook in which you take class notes, I encourage you to keep a separate journal for reading notes. You should note any questions, thoughts, perplexities, and interpretations of the text while you are reading and be prepared to raise them during class. Attending office hours also contributes to your participation grade. I am looking for evidence of active and serious intellectual engagement with the course material.

Attendance is mandatory and role will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are allowed two unexcused absences. After two unexcused absences, *three points* will be subtracted from your final participation grade for *each* class missed. This means that three or more unexcused absences will affect your overall grade negatively.

Apropos the use of technology, please turn off your phones, tablets, laptops, and recording devices and do not take them out at any time before or during class. If you have a special need for one of these items, you should explain that need to me. If you use a cell phone, laptop, tablet, or recording device in the classroom without prior approval from the professor, you will receive zero points for the “Participation & Attendance” portion of your grade.

Grading Policy

Plus/minus grades will be used on all assignments and final grades in this course. All work will also be given a numerical grade on the following scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Course Flags

Ethics: This course carries the Ethics flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations.

Global Cultures: This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. Once registered, please deliver your accommodation letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

Other University Resources

The University Resources for Students Canvas Website is available here: <https://utexas.instructure.com/enroll/TP964H>. You can there find information about UT's Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), University Health Services (UHS), The Sanger Learning Center, etc.

Academic Integrity

Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the university and uphold academic integrity.”

Academic honesty is expected and honorable. We are all bound by the university’s policies regarding academic integrity. To learn more about academic integrity standards, advice for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>. If you have any doubts or questions regarding your work as you complete assignments, please check with me.

Email & Office Hours

You are encouraged to correspond with me via email if an issue arises outside of normal class hours. Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email. To the extent possible, all substantive questions should be brought to class or to office hours rather than emailed.

Office Hours: Until renovations of Littlefield Home are completed, all office hours will need to be by appointment at a location on campus to be determined. Please coordinate with me regarding office hours by email.

Course Plan

I will give specific assignments for each class as we go along, but this is a rough schedule. Please note that specific readings and dates are subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. Please be sure to set your notifications in Canvas to receive class announcements. This will be my primary means of communication regarding any changes to the syllabus.

Aug 22-24 Introduction; Sophocles, *Antigone*

Aug 29-31 Sophocles, *Antigone*

Sept 5-7 Plutarch, *The Life of Lycurgus*

Sept 12-14 Plutarch, *The Life of Lycurgus*

Sept 19-21 Xenophon, *The Regime of the Lacedaemonians*

First Exam— Due September 25 at 11:59pm (Canvas)

Sept 26-28 Plato, *Apology of Socrates*

Oct 3-5 Plato, *Apology of Socrates*

Oct 10-12 Plato, *Republic* I

Oct 17-19 Plato, *Republic* II-III

Oct 24-26 Plato, *Republic* IV-V

Oct 31-Nov 2 Plato, *Republic* VI-VII

Second Exam — Due November 6 at 11:59pm (Canvas)

Nov 7-9 Aristotle, *Politics* I

Nov 14-16 Aristotle, *Politics* I & III

Nov 21-23 Thanksgiving Break — No Class

Nov 28-30 Aristotle, *Politics* III

Dec 5 Optional Review Session

Dec 7-11 **Final Exam — Deadline TBA (Canvas)**