

**The University of Texas at Austin
GOV 351C; CTI 320
Unique # 37380; 29280**

THE CLASSICAL QUEST FOR JUSTICE

Spring 2024

UTC 3.134

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Course Description

The questions at the heart of classical political philosophy are simple, even if the treatments of them by the ancient philosophers are extremely complex. What is justice? What does it ask of us as individuals? What does it demand of political communities in their internal structures and in their interactions with other communities? Are the demands of political life in harmony with the radical questioning of philosophy? In this course, we will consider these and other such questions through a careful study of three masterpieces of classical antiquity: Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Plato's *Republic*, and Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War. These works will be approached not only as crucial documents for our understanding of a distant age, but as works that speak directly to permanent questions of moral and political life.

Prerequisite

Completion of at least thirty semester hours of coursework.

Texts

Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*, translated by West and West (Cornell)

Plato, *Republic*, translated by Bloom (Basic Books)

Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides*, edited by Strassler (The Free Press)

- Please purchase the editions of the books ordered for this class, and always bring the book we are discussing to class.

Requirements

Careful reading is the most important requirement. The reading assignments in this course are not long, but they are difficult; make sure you read them slowly and take notes while you read. You should try to come to every class with questions, comments, and interpretations. Since the love of knowledge is not always powerful enough to inspire students to do all the reading, I will give unannounced quizzes. These quizzes will not be particularly difficult for those who have done the reading carefully, and they can be a nice way of lifting your grade. Any quizzes missed due to an unexcused absence from class cannot be made up. I also encourage you to keep a reading notebook (separate from the notebook you use for class notes) for the notes you take as you read. If you turn in such a notebook at the end of the semester, you can add 1 or 2 points to your final grade, depending on the thoroughness of your notes.

You have the option of writing a paper this semester. If you choose this option, you will write an analytical essay on a theme in one or two of the readings. I will hand out paper topics, with staggered due dates, several times during the semester. You would be wise not to wait until the last set of topics, since the end of the semester is a busy time, and you might find one of the earlier topics more interesting. To encourage you to write the optional paper and to reward those who put forth the extra effort, your paper grade will be factored into your final grade only if it will be to your advantage. No late papers will be accepted.

There will be two exams, one in the middle of the term (on Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Republic*), the other at the end of the term (on Plato and Thucydides, but with greater weight given to Thucydides). The first exam will be given in class; the second will be given on the scheduled day during the exam period. The exams will be blue-book essay exams.

On all your work, you are expected to know and to adhere to UT's policies on academic honesty.

Attendance Policy and other Odds and Ends (please read carefully)

- Role will be taken at the beginning of each class, and attendance will be considered in determining your final grade. After two unexcused absences, your grade for "Attendance and Participation" will drop 10 points for each unexcused absence. That means that a significant number of absences will have a serious downward effect on your final grade. If you are late to class, you will be regarded as absent for that day. If you have perfect attendance for the entire semester, 5 extra points will be added to the "Attendance and Participation" portion of your grade.
- No work submitted by email will be accepted without prior approval.
- Please turn off your phones, put them away, and do not take them out at any time before or during class.

- Please do not use a computer or a tablet in class unless you have a special need for one (in which case you should explain that need to me).
- If you have a special need for a computer or a tablet, please do not sit in one of the three back rows. If you use a computer, a tablet, or a phone for any purpose other than taking class notes (e.g., emailing, texting, surfing the web, etc.), you will receive an F for the attendance and participation portion of your grade for the entire semester.

Grades

Your grade will be calculated by one of the following two methods. Plus/minus grades will be used in the final grades.

With the optional paper:

Paper: 25%
First exam: 25%
Final exam: 30%
Attendance and Participation: 10%
Quizzes: 10%

Without the optional paper:

First Exam: 35%
Final Exam: 45%
Attendance and Participation: 10%
Quizzes: 10%

Note on Flags

This course carries the Ethics and Leadership flag. Ethics and Leadership courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Disability and Access, 471-6259, <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Course Plan

I will give the specific assignments (and some study questions) for each class as we go along, but this is a rough schedule:

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| Jan. 16 – 18 | Introduction; Plato, <i>The Apology of Socrates</i> Socrates on trial |
| Jan. 23 – 25 | Plato, <i>The Apology of Socrates</i> ; introduction to Plato's <i>Republic</i> The philosopher and the city |

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| Jan. 30 – Feb. 1 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I |
| | The setting of the <i>Republic</i> ; the question of justice |
| Feb. 6 – 8 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books I-II |
| | Thrasymachus' challenge; Glaucon and Adeimantus' demand |
| Feb. 13 – 15 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books II-III |
| | The origins and character of Socrates' city-in-speech |
| Feb. 20 – 22 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books III-IV |
| | The education of the guardians; the noble lie; the problem of justice |
| Feb. 27 – 29 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books V-VI |
| | The three "waves": equality, communism, and philosophic rule |
| Mar. 5 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> , VII |
| | Philosophy and the city; the ideas; the cave; the lessons of the city-in-speech |
| Mar. 7 | MIDTERM EXAM |
| SPRING BREAK | |
| Mar. 19 – 21 | Thucydides, Book I |
| | The archaeology; the cause of the war; the conference at Sparta; the question of justice and necessity |
| Mar. 26 – 28 | Thucydides, Books I-II |
| | Athenian imperialism; Athens and Sparta; Periclean Athens |
| Apr. 2 – 4 | Thucydides, Books II-III |
| | The plague; the character of the war; the Mytilenian debate |

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| Apr. 9 – 11 | Thucydides, Books III-IV |
| | Revolutionary politics and human nature; two great non-Athenians and one great Athenian |
| Apr. 16 – 18 | Thucydides, selections from Book V |
| | The peace treaties; the Melian dialogue; justice, necessity, and piety |
| April 23 – 25 | Thucydides, selections from Books VI-VII |
| | Alcibiades and Nicias; the Sicilian expedition; the tragedy of Athens |
| Final exam week | FINAL EXAM |