

**CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**  
**CTI 302 / GOV 314E (Unique Course Number: 29960/ 38520)**  
**Spring 2021**  
**PAR 201, MWF 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Dr. Erik Dempsey**

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**Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12 and Friday 3-4 on Zoom; Thursday 3-4 at the tables outside Gregory Gym**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a course about human nature, and the highest things in human nature: the capacities for virtue and for love. We will be asking, at heart, what human beings are, what they care most about, and what the answers to those questions suggest about how we should live, both individually and as members of a community.

We approach those questions through the close study of primary sources. Throughout the course, we will engage with the thought of the past, not only as a historical curiosity but also as a potential source of wisdom on questions that retain their importance today.

The class proceeds in roughly chronological order, beginning with the ancient Greeks and ending with contemporary theorists of evolution. In the first unit, we will look at how Plato approached the questions of virtue and of love in some of his key dialogues. We will then look at St. Augustine's Christian approach to the same issues, and examine what "virtue" means viewed from the perspective of the City of Man and the City of God. After that, we will turn to Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, whose re-thinking of the human condition helped lay the groundwork for modern political life. We will then look at one of the key modern critics of liberalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who criticized parts of Hobbes's account of human nature, while retaining certain key features of it.

In the final section of the course, we will study Darwin's evolutionary theory of human mental and moral faculties in *The Descent of Man*, as well as a selection of current statements on the science of evolutionary psychology that grew out of it. We will see how the understanding of human nature embodied by these theories gives rise to very different interpretations of the meaning of virtue, and the nature of human love.

## **CLASS MEETINGS**

The class meetings will proceed mainly by way of close textual analysis. Make sure you do each reading carefully before coming to class. You are required to bring your copy of the assigned text to every class so that you can follow and participate in the discussions.

The following are the rules of classroom conduct:

- You are required to have a physical copy of every book. E-readers are not allowed in class.
- Turn off and put away all cell phones before class begins. Texting during class is a violation of class rules. If you are caught texting during class, it will count as two unexcused absences.
- Use of laptops during class is not permitted. Please store your laptops before class begins.
- Treat one another respectfully.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING RUBRIC**

The course requirements have been adjusted in light of the pandemic and the burden it places on students. Students can choose one of the two following options completing the course requirements:

### **Option #1: Without optional paper**

**First Paper: 40% of final grade**

**Final Paper: 50%**

**Short Writing: 10%**

### **Option #2: With optional paper**

**First Paper: 25%**

**Second Paper: 25%**

**Final Paper: 40%**

**Short Writing: 10%**

If you complete the optional paper, I will calculate your grade both ways, and you will receive the higher of the two scores as your final mark.

**Papers.** There will be three papers assigned in this class, the second of which is optional. The first two will have a length requirement of 1000-1200 words; the last paper will have a length requirement of about 1250-1500 words. Papers will be graded both on substance and on the quality of the writing. The shorter papers are due **February 26** and **April 16 (this is the optional paper)**, and **the final paper is due on May 13**. I will distribute each paper topic on Canvas at least 13 days before the paper is due.

You may rewrite your first two papers. If you rewrite, your grade can increase by as much as one full grade (so, you can go from a B- to an A-, for instance).

**Short writing assignments.** There will be two short writing assignments. There is a short paper due on February 5. You will also write a review of another student's paper when you turn in your paper on February 26; the review will be due Monday, March 1. Each of these assignments will count for half of this part of your grade.

**Attendance.** Attendance is **required** at every class meeting. You get two unexcused absences with no immediate penalty. **After that, for every class you miss, your final average will drop by 1%.** Having more than 8 unexcused absences—including the first two, for which there is no other penalty—will result in automatic failure of the course.

Due to the pandemic, absences will be excused easily. If you are feeling even slightly sick, I urge you to stay home. You are required to email me (use the subject heading "Absence") to let me know that you are missing class, but I will excuse any health-related absence, and will not require a doctor's note.

**Class participation.** This is a discussion intensive class, and you are expected to come to every meeting having done the readings and prepared to offer your thoughts and interpretations of them. You can improve your grade by as much as 1/3 (say, from B to B+) through excellent participation.

### **GRADING POLICY**

We will use the plus / minus grading system for this class. Quizzes, tests, and attendance will be graded numerically. Papers and participation in discussion sections will be given letter grades. In order to calculate your final grade, these will be translated into number grades as follows:

A: 97; A-: 91; B+: 88; B: 84.5; B-: 81; C+: 78; C: 74.5; C-: 71; D: 65; F: 30

Grades in between two letters grades count as the average of those two grades—an A-/B+ is an 89.5, for instance. Final grades are calculated numerically, then translated into a letter grade using the following scale. **Please note: grades will not be rounded up! You need a 93.5 average to get an A.**

A: 93.5-100; A-: 90-93.5; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-80; C: 73-77; C-: 70-73; D: 60-70; F: below 60.

## UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

This course counts towards the Certificate Program in Core Texts and Ideas, a 6-course sequence in the great books, ideas, and controversies that have shaped Western civilization. The program is open to students in all majors and colleges. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/coretexts/> or email the academic director, Professor Lorraine Pangle, at: [lorrainepangle@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:lorrainepangle@austin.utexas.edu).

This course may be used to fulfill the social and behavioral sciences component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, critical thinking skills, empirical and quantitative skills, and social responsibility.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

You are required to have the edition of each text that we use in class. If you are not willing to acquire the right edition, don't take the course.

Plato. *"Protagoras" and "Meno."* Trans. Robert Bartlett. Cornell University Press. ISBN 0801488656

Plato. *Symposium*. Trans. Seth Benardete. The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 9780226042756.

Augustine. *City of God*. Trans. Henry Bettenson. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140448942.

Machivelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0226500446.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN 0872201775.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Major Political Writings*. Translated and edited by John T. Scott. The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0226921867.

Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140436316.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

**These readings may be subject to change. I will announce changes during class and post them on Canvas.**

Wednesday, January 20: Introduction: Aristotle excerpt

Friday, January 22: Plato, *Meno*, entire

Monday, January 25: Plato, *Protagoras*, 309a-320c

Wednesday, January 27: Plato, *Protagoras*, 320c-328d

Friday, January 29: Plato, *Protagoras*, 328d-336b

Monday, February 1: Plato, *Protagoras*, 336b-348c

Wednesday, February 3: Plato, *Protagoras*, 348c-362a

Friday, February 5: Continued

### **Short paper due at 11:59 PM on Friday, February 5**

Monday, February 8: Plato, *Symposium*, 172a-180b  
Wednesday, February 10: Plato, *Symposium*, 180b-188e  
Friday, February 12: Plato, *Symposium*, 189a-193e

Monday, February 15: Plato, *Symposium*, 193e-201c  
Wednesday, February 17: Plato, *Symposium*, 201c-212c  
Friday, February 19: Plato, *Symposium*, continued

Monday, February 22: Augustine, *Confessions* (handout) and *City of God*, Book I, Preface; Book II, Chapters 2, 20-21; Book IV, Chapter 4 and 15  
Wednesday, February 24: *City of God*, Book V, Preface, 11-22; Book XII, Chapters 5-9, 22-23, and 28; Book XIV, Chapters 1-6, 10-15, 25, and 28;  
Friday, February 26: Augustine, *City of God*, Book XV, Chapters 4 and 5

### **First paper due at 11:59 PM on February 26**

Monday, March 1: Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX, Chapters 4-8, 12-21, 25-28  
Wednesday, March 3: Augustine, *City of God*, Book XX, Chapters 1-3  
Friday, March 5: Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedictory Letter, Chapters 1-2

Monday, March 8: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 3-7  
Wednesday, March 10: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 8-9  
Friday, March 12: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 10-14

### **SPRING BREAK (March 15-March 19)**

Monday, March 22: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 15-17  
Wednesday, March 24: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 18-19  
Friday, March 26: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter 20-25

Monday, March 29: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter 26  
Wednesday, March 31: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedictory Letter, Introduction, and Chapter 31, paragraph 41; Chapter 46 (paragraphs 1 and 10-13); Chapters 6-8  
Friday, April 2: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 10-11, 13

Monday, April 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 14-15  
Wednesday, April 7: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 17  
Friday, April 9: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 18 (paragraphs 1-9, 20); Chapter 19 (paragraphs 1-4); Chapter 21 (all); Chapter 28 (paragraphs 1-2); Chapter 30 (paragraphs 1-5)

Monday, April 12: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 51-64, with notes from 119-120\*  
Wednesday, April 14: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 65-77 top, with notes from 120-145  
Friday, April 16: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, no new reading

### **Optional paper due at 11:59 PM on April 16**

Monday, April 19: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 77-90, with notes from 145-147  
Wednesday, April 21: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 90-97, with notes from 147-149  
Friday, April 23: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 97-110, with notes from 149-151

Monday, April 26: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 110-117  
Wednesday, April 28: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Chapter 1 (pp. 21-28 and 42-43 only), Chapter 2 (pp. 63-68 only)  
Friday, April 30: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Chapter 4

Monday, May 3: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Chapter 5  
Wednesday, May 5: Evolutionary psychology handouts (Trivers, Pangle)  
Friday, May 7: Course Conclusion

**Final Paper Due: Thursday, May 13 at 11:59 PM**

### **OTHER POLICIES**

**Students with disabilities:** Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

**Academic dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty will be treated extremely seriously. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. The university's Honor Code, with information on the meaning of academic integrity, is found at the following website:

<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/>

**Accommodations for religious holidays:** If anyone needs to miss class for a religious observance, I will hold a make-up session for you and the absence will be excused. If anyone misses a religious observance for class, they can take it up with their god.