

CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT
CTI 302 / GOV 314E (Unique Course Number: 29960/ 38520)
Fall 2024
PAR 301, TTh 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Final Exam: December 13, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Dr. Erik Dempsey

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course about human nature, and some of the highest things in human nature: the capacities for virtue and for communal life. 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 mostly (but not entirely) in 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 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. This line of thought also ushered in what some regard as a crisis of human life. We will look at two key thinkers who speak to that, if in rather different ways: Blaise Pascal (who, being roughly contemporary with Thomas Hobbes, anticipated some of the difficulties into which modern thought might lead) and Friedrich Nietzsche.

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 different views of what political life means and requires.

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

Students can choose one of the two following options completing the course requirements:

Option #1: Without optional paper

First exam: 25% of final grade

Second exam: 25% of final grade

Final Exam: 40% of final grade

Quizzes: 10% of final grade

Option #2: With optional paper

First exam: 20%

Second exam: 20%

Optional paper: 20%

Final exam: 30%

Quizzes: 10%

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

Exams. There will be two exams during the course and a final during exam period. The exams will be primarily essay-based with a few short answer questions. The first exam will be on Plato's *Republic*, the second on Augustine, Hobbes, and Rousseau, and the third will be cumulative (so don't forget what you learn about the *Republic*). I will provide study sheets at least 13 days in advance of each exam that will have specific guidance about what to study.

Optional paper: If you choose, you may write an optional paper. I will suggest possible topics in class, but you can also propose your own--though if you do, you need to clear it with me by sending an email. You can submit the optional paper whenever you want until **November 19**. You cannot rewrite your optional paper or write a second optional paper.

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes on the reading at the beginning of some classes. These will be based on the readings. We will post study questions on canvas, and if you can answer those, you should do well on the quizzes.

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 6 unexcused absences—including the first two, for which there is no other penalty—will result in automatic failure of the course.

If you are feeling ill and think you might be contagious, please stay home. You are required to email both the professor and TA to let us know that you are missing class. Use the subject heading “Absence” in your email. The absence will be excused and will not count against your attendance grade. If you miss more than one class due to illness, you need to get a note from a doctor.

Class Participation: Since this is a large class, you will not be graded on participation. But if you contribute regularly and show you know the material in lectures, your grade can be boosted by 1/3 of a grade (so, a B can become a B+).

In addition, Mr. Donohue will be hosting voluntary discussion sections. You can boost your grade also by regular attendance *and informed participation* at those.

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: lorraine.pangle@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. *The Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Basic Books. ISBN 0465094082.

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

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.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensees*. Trans. A.J. Krailsheimer. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140446451.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0140441182.

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

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

August 27: Course Introduction, with Aristotle handout (pdf posted on canvas)

August 29: *Republic*, Book I, 327a - 338b

September 3: *Republic*, Book I, 338b-354c

September 5: *Republic*, Book II, 357a-373e

September 10: *Republic*, Book II, 373e-383c; Book III, 386a-392a, 412b-417b

September 12: *Republic*, Book IV, 419a-445e

September 17: *Republic*, Book V, 449a-480a

September 19: *Republic*, Book VI, 484a-511a

September 24: *Republic*, Book VII, 514a-521c;
September 26: *Republic*, Book X, 608c-621d

October 1: Augustine, *Confessions* (handout; posted on canvas) and *City of God*, Book I, Preface; Book II, Chapters 2, 20-21; Book IV, Chapter 4 and 15

October 3: Exam #1

October 8: *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; Book XV, Chapters 4-5

October 10: Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX, Chapters 4-8, 12-21, 25-28; Book XX, Chapters 1-3

October 15: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedicatory Letter, Introduction, and Chapter 31, paragraph 41; Chapter 46 (paragraphs 1 and 10-13); Chapters 6-8

October 17: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 10-11, 13-14

October 22: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 15, Chapter 18 (paragraphs 1-9, 20); Chapter 19 (paragraphs 1-4); Chapter 21 (all); Chapter 28 (paragraphs 1-2); Chapter 30 (paragraphs 1-5)

October 24: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 51-64, with notes from 119-120*

October 29: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 65-77 top, with notes from 120-145

October 31: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 77-97, with notes from 145-149

November 5: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 97-117, with notes from 149-151

November 7: Rousseau, concluded

November 12: Exam #2

November 14: Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (reading TBD)

November 19: Pascal, *Pensees* (reading TBD), and Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue (**final day to submit an optional paper**)

November 21: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (reading TBD)

November 28: Thanksgiving break

December 3: Darwin, *Descent of Men*, Chapter 1 (pp. 21-28 and 42-43 only), Chapter 2 (pp. 63-68 only), Chapter 4 (all), Chapter 5 (154 bottom – 158 only)

December 5: Evolutionary psychology handouts (Trivers, Pangle) – to be posted on canvas

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/!!!](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 policy on academic integrity may be found at the following website:

<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

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