

Political Thought – Classical and Medieval
Professor Melissa Schwartzberg
Fall 2008
Tuesdays, 11-12:50
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3, and by appointment
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This course provides an advanced run through some classic works of ancient political thought with an eye toward the political institutions of the societies in which they were produced. In particular, we will focus on the following question throughout much of the semester: How might we design political institutions to harness the epistemic capabilities of the community or some portion thereof?

Course prerequisites

This course is structured as a graduate seminar in political theory. There will be a considerable amount of reading, which must be done with great care, since high-quality participation is expected. The bare-minimum course prerequisites are as follows:

- Undergraduates in Columbia College: Contemporary Civilization, with a first semester grade of B+ or better. An additional course in political theory is strongly preferred.
- GS students and master's students outside of the Departments of Political Science and Classics: At least one prior course in the history of political thought, preferably one in which Plato's *Republic* was assigned.

Course requirements:

- Midterm take-home exam (10 pages): 40%.
- Final take-home exam (10 pages): 40%.
- Class participation: 20%.
- Ph.D. students in political theory who would prefer to write a research paper in lieu of the take-home exams may do so (approximately 25 pages, worth 80%).

Required texts (available at Book Culture):

Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Rex Warner. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Plato. *Statesman*. Ed. Julia Annas and Robin Waterfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Ernest Barker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Cicero. *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws*. Trans. James Zetzel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Marsilius of Padua. *Defensor Pacis*. Trans. Annabel Brett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Recommended texts

Recommended texts are aimed at enhancing your understanding of the texts, particularly with respect to the course theme. If you have limited time, you should not bother to look at the secondary literature; instead, please focus on carefully reading the primary texts. (Ph.D. students, however, are strongly advised to have a look at the secondary literature.)

I. Introduction: political theory and institutions in early Greece

September 2

Reading (in class):

- Herodotus, *Histories*. III.80-84 (Debate on the Constitutions)

II. A political theorist's guide to Athenian democracy

September 9

[Available on Courseworks]

- Demosthenes. *On the Crown*.
- Ober, Josiah. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Chapter 2.

Recommended

- Hansen, Mogens Herman. *Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993.
- Manin, Bernard. *Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Ch. 1.
- Ober, Josiah. "Epistemic Democracy in Classical Athens: How Diversity Can Foster Innovation." APSA Paper 2008.
- Schwartzberg, Melissa. "Athenian Democracy and Legal Change." *American Political Science Review*, May 2004, 98:2, 311-325

III. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

September 16

- Thucydides, pp. 35-123 (Book 1); 136-164 (II.18-65); 194-223 (III.1-50); 236-245 (III.69-85); 401-408 (V.84-116); 414-437 (VI.8-41); 525-537 (VII.72-87); 562-599 (VIII.45-98).

Recommended:

- Farrar, Cynthia. *The Origins of Democratic Thinking: The Invention of Politics in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Ch. 5.

IV. Plato, *Republic and Statesman*

September 23

- Plato, *Republic*, Books 1-5

September 30: Rosh Hashanah – Class Cancelled

October 7

- Plato, *Republic*, Books 6-10

October 14

- Plato, *Statesman*

Recommended

- Klosko, George. *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Lane, Melissa S. *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Monoson, S. Sara. *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. Ch. 5.

V. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics and Politics*

October 21 [First take-home exam distributed]

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, V, VI; Aristotle, *Politics*, I

October 28 [First take-home exam due]

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Books II-IV

Recommended

- Frank, Jill. *A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Yack, Bernard. *Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotelian Political Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

November 4: Election Day – University Holiday

VI. Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws*

November 11

- Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*

November 18

- Cicero, *On the Laws*

Recommended

- Garsten, Bryan. *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006. Ch. 5.
- Lintott, Andrew. *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

VII. Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*

November 25

- Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, I

Recommended

- Gewirth, Alan. *Marsilius of Padua and Medieval Political Philosophy* (introduction). New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

- Quillet, Jeannine. "Community, counsel and representation." In J.H. Burns, ed., *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

VIII. Course conclusion

December 2

- Second take-home exam distributed, due December 16