

**Political Science 5000:
Foundations of Political Thought**

Mark Button, Ph. D
Department of Political Science
OSH, Office 212E
585-7987
Office Hours: M/W 9:30-10:30
(and by appointment)

Fall, 2005
OSH 113
M/W 8:05-9:25

*I prefer before heaven to go astray with Plato rather than hold
true views with his opponents – Cicero (Tusculan
Disputations)*

Course Description:

This course provides students with an introduction to ancient and medieval political thought (roughly from 500 B.C.E to 410 C.E). We will read widely from a range of different thinkers employing a variety of writing styles, including: plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles, the dialogues of Plato, the political and ethical writings of Aristotle, as well as a selection of Hellenistic, Roman, Jewish, and Christian writings. The thinkers assembled in this course continue to be studied today because they offer visions of political and ethical life that remain exemplars of sustained reflection on the promise and peril of collective human existence. The overarching theme for this course, and one that connects all of the thinkers that we will examine in this class, is the ethical imperative: “*gnothi seauton*,” or “know thyself.”

Course Objectives:

This class aspires to teach you something about ancient and medieval political thought, but it also seeks to encourage the thoughtful examination of our contemporary political and cultural life with the political and ethical frameworks made possible by an exposure to thinkers like Socrates and Saint Augustine. We shall endeavor to take these figures seriously not only by studying them closely, but also by considering how they might continue to speak to and hold relevance for us today.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation: 10%. I expect students to come to class prepared to actively contribute to our group discussions of the required readings, every session. “Participation” obviously assumes your attendance, but further entails such things as: raising questions, expressing confusions and/or concerns, pressing objections and disagreements, considering the implications and consequences of ideas, theories or beliefs, introducing new arguments or critically interrogating previous arguments, etc.

2. Two In-Class Writing Assignments: 15% each. These in-class writing assignments will be drawn from class discussions of the required readings. In these assignments I will ask you to address an essay question in relation to one or more of the political/theoretical controversies that we will be considering throughout this class. **October 19th and November 9th.** The first writing assignment will focus on Plato’s *Republic*; the second writing assignment will address Aristotle’s political thought.

**Please note that there are no “make-up assignments” in this course. If you anticipate having a scheduling conflict (see the schedule that follows), you should see me as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. In the case of a medical emergency or some other extenuating circumstance an alternative writing assignment may be arranged through the Testing Center, if accompanied by appropriate documentation (e.g., a valid doctor’s note).*

3. Short In-Class Quizzes: 20%. To encourage (and reward) attendance and active learning, I will periodically (and unannounced) distribute short in-class quizzes to test for basic reading and lecture comprehension.

**Again, take notice that there are no make-up assignments for this course, and there will be no make-up quizzes. I will, however, drop one quiz from the calculation of final course scores.*

4. Final Paper: 40% of final grade. The final comprehensive essay (8-10 pages) will cover the major thinkers, issues, and themes emphasized throughout the course. More information about this final assignment will be made available during the penultimate week of class. **Final Papers are due by 12:00 p.m., Wednesday, December 14th. No exceptions.**

**Late papers will be graded down a half-letter grade for each day they are late.*

The Department of Political Science at the University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, <http://disability.utah.edu/> 162 Olpin Union Bldg, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification.

Student Academic Conduct:

The University of Utah's policies pertaining to Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty will be carefully observed and strictly enforced in this class. This policy appears on pages 11-13 of the 2000-2002 General Catalog and in the electronic Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>

Any instance of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may also result in a failing grade for the course. The University's definition of plagiarism is as follows:

“Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.

Required Texts:

The following required books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore.

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*
Sophocles, *The Theban Plays*
Four Texts on Socrates, ed. Thomas West
Plato, *The Republic*
Aristotle, *The Politics*
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Required Reserve Readings:

Reserve Readings are available at the Reserve Desk of the Marriott Library. These readings, marked by an asterisk (*), are also available electronically through the Library's web site. To access these readings electronically follow these steps: from the Library's home page (<http://www.lib.utah.edu/>), under the heading “Research Tools,” click on the link labeled “Course Reserves,” and from there you can submit the course number (political science 5000) or course instructor (Button) to read, download, or print any of the assigned reserve readings for this class.

Class Schedule

This class will be conducted as a seminar. Thus, all readings must be completed prior to the date for which they have been assigned for discussion.

W Aug 25 **Course Introduction:**
Ancient Greece, Democracy, and Political Theory: Why study the Greeks? Why now?

Begin reading Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, Parts I and II

I. Suffering into Truth: Greek Tragedy and Political Theory

“Justice turns the balance scales/ sees that we suffer/ and we suffer and we learn/ And we will know the future when it comes/ Greet it too early, weep too soon” – Aeschylus

Week 1

M Aug 29 Aeschylus, Part I of *The Oresteia*

W Aug 31 Aeschylus, Parts I and II of *The Oresteia*
The Libation Bearers and *Agamemnon*

Week 2

M Sept 5 Labor Day: No Class

W Sept 7 Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*, Part III of *The Oresteia*

Week 3

M Sept 12 Sophocles, *Antigone*

W Sept 14 *Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (selections: Pericles’, “Funeral Oration,” and “The Mytilenian Debate”)

II. Philosophy and Politics in Conflict

“For my part I do believe that it would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than that my single self should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me” – Socrates

Week 4

M Sept 19 Plato, *Euthyphro*

W Sept 21 Plato, *Apology*

Week 5

M Sept 26 Plato, *Apology, continued*

W Sept 28 Plato, *Crito*

III. Justice and the Well-Ordered City/Soul

“[T]he argument [about justice] is not about just any question, but about the way one should live” – Socrates

Week 6

M Oct 3 Plato, *Republic*, I, II

W Oct 5 *Republic*, III-V

Week 7

M Oct 10 *Republic*, VI, VII

W Oct 12 *Republic*, VIII-X

Week 8

M Oct 17 Summary and final discussion of the *Republic*

W Oct 19 In-Class Writing Assignment

IV. Aristotle: Politics and Virtue

“The true student of politics is thought to have studied virtue above all things” – Aristotle

Week 9

M Oct 24 Aristotle, *Politics*, I-II

W Oct 26 *Politics*, III-IV

Week 10

M Oct 31 *Politics*, V-VIII

W Nov 2 Aristotle, *Ethics*, I-III

Week 11

M Nov 7 *Ethics*, V, VI, VIII, X

W Nov 9 **In-Class Writing Assignment**

**V. Hellenistic Ethical and Political Thought:
Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism**

“I am content if I am in accord with Nature in what I will to get and will to avoid, if I follow Nature in impulse to act and to refrain from action, in purpose, and design and assent” – Epictetus

Week 12

M Nov 14 *Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus* and *Principal Doctrines* (selections)

W Nov 16 *Epictetus, *The Discourses and The Handbook* (selections)

*Seneca, Letter XC

VI. Jewish Sources

“What was, will be again, what has been done, will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun!” – Qoheleth

Week 13

M Nov 21 **The Book of Job* (Also available on-line at:
<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/job.htm>)

W Nov 23 **“The Words of Qoheleth,”* or *Ecclesiastes*

VII. Rome and the Christians

"[W]e are carried away by custom to our own undoing and it is hard to struggle against the stream. Will this torrent never dry up? How much longer will it sweep the sons of Adam down to that vast and terrible sea which cannot easily be crossed, even by those who climb upon the ark of the Cross?"
– Augustine

Week 14

M Nov 28

*Paul, "Letter to the Romans" (also available on-line at:
<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/romans.htm>)

W Nov 30

*St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX
(Also available at:
<http://www.ccel.org/index/classics.html>)

Final Paper Assignment to be distributed

Week 15

M Dec 5

*St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books I and III
(Also available at:
<http://www.ccel.org/index/classics.html>)

W Dec 7

Course Review

FINAL PAPERS DUE: December 14th, by 12:00 pm.

Reserve Reading List

POLS 5000, Fall 2005

Button

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Modern Library, 1951), pp. 102-109; 163-173.

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* and *Principal Doctrines*, in *Great Political Thinkers*, Fifth Edition, ed. Ebenstein and Ebenstein (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), pp. 185-190.

Epictetus, *The Discourses and The Manual*, in *Great Political Thinkers*, Fifth Edition, ed. Ebenstein and Ebenstein (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), pp. 166-172.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, in *Great Political Thinkers*, Fifth Edition, ed. Ebenstein and Ebenstein (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), pp. 173-184.

Sallust, "Preface" from *The Jugurthine War and The Conspiracy of Catiline*, trans. S.A. Handford (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 175-183.

Cicero, *On the State, On the Laws*, from *Cicero on Government*, trans. Michael Grant (New York: Penguin Books, 1993),

Augustine, *City of God*, trans. John O'Meara (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), Book XIX.

Augustine, *Political Writings*, ed. E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-8; pp. 61-66; pp. 127-133; pp. 205-214.

Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Chaim Rabin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), pp. 41-48; 142-148; 173-180; 184-195.

Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, ed. William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), pp. 11-38; pp. 249-260; pp. 263-271.