

Origins of Political Thought (Winter term 2010)
POLISCI 230A/330A, CLASSHIS 133/332, HMNTIES 331.
MW 11:00AM-12:30PM. Bldg 200-219.

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DRAFT of 2010.1.03

Course description:

Survey of the origins and development of political thought in ancient Greece, with a focus on central texts by Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle. The three central concepts of classical political thought -- *power*, *legitimacy*, and *justice* -- have remained central in contemporary political theory. Some other concepts that were of primary interest to classical likewise loom large in contemporary political thought: *freedom*, *equality*, *law*, and *democracy*. Yes other issues that deeply concerned the ancients are less central (although hardly unknown) to mainstream contemporary theory: *citizenship*, *dignity*, *civic education*, *civic friendship*, and *piety*. We will be looking at a variety of texts. Some of these are self-consciously philosophical in the contemporary sense of the term (Plato, Aristotle). Others are not (Aeschylus, Thucydides, Demosthenes et al.).

The boundaries between philosophy and other forms of writing that treated politics in evaluative and normative terms were not as clearly drawn in classical antiquity as in modernity. This forces (or invites) us to consider epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry, along with historiography, polemical tracts, and biography. We will be touching base throughout with later interpretations and appropriations of the earlier Greek tradition of political thought, from Polybius, Cicero, Plutarch, and Augustine; via Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau; to Karl Popper, Leo Strauss, and Isaiah Berlin.

There are a variety of (sometimes overlapping) disciplinary/intellectual traditions in the study of classical political thought. These include philosophy (Anglo-American analytic and continental), political theory (liberal, communitarian, historical, Marxist, postmodern, and Straussian), and classical/literary studies. We will be drawing from many of these interpretive traditions in the course of the term.

Student responsibilities:

- Regular attendance and class participation. **Please bring a copy of the relevant texts to each class meeting.** The course is conducted as a seminar, so your presence and active participation are essential. 20% of grade
- Weekly précis: At the start of class of Wednesday, each week (beginning in the second week) each student will turn in a 1-page (single spaced) précis summarizing key points of the week's reading and raising one or more questions for class discussion. Exceptions: the standard précis is not required in first week, last week, or in the week in which you serve as class leader (see below). Total: seven précis's = 20% of grade. **Due each Wednesday.**
- Class leadership: Each student is responsible for preparing an extended (5 page, double spaced) précis for one class meeting. At that meeting the student will be

- expected to take an active role in leading the discussion for part of the class period. If more than one student signs up for a given day, you are expected to work out a leadership plan in advance. Leadership assignments made in 2nd week of the class. 20% of grade. **Due on date assigned.**
- Final paper: ca. 10 pages (undergrads) - 15 pages (grads), double-spaced, potentially to be developed from class leadership session. 40% of grade. **Due on March 12.**
 - Additional reading – After each week I have listed some major interpretive works. These are NOT required, but they may prove helpful to you, especially for preparing your class leadership and final paper.

Class meeting schedule

* = text available on Coursework.

Week 1

1. January 4. Introduction: Classical scholarship and its conventions. The classical tradition and origins of the western political philosophy: (e.g.) Machiavelli's Livy, Hobbes' Thucydides, Rousseau's Sparta. Mills' Athens. Contemporary approaches to classical theory: Strauss' Plato, Popper's Plato, Wolin's Plato, Nussbaum and Sen's Aristotle. Arendt's Aristotle. **Read: Balot 1-15.**

Additional Reading A few major **interpreters/challengers of the classical Greek tradition**: Cicero, Augustine *City of God*, Machiavelli *Discorsi*, Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan* and translation of Thucydides, Rousseau *Social Contract* (Sparta), J.S. Mill (democratic Athens: see Urbinati), Benjamin Constant, Karl Popper, Leo Strauss (see Drury, Pangle, Zuckert), Isaiah Berlin, Hannah Arendt (see Villa). **Contemporary political theorists** who draw on Greek tradition: Arendt, Strauss, MacIntyre, Wolin, Euben, Monoson, Saxonhouse, Wood, Nussbaum, Williams. **Histories of interpretation**: Roberts (Athens), Nelson (republicanism), Nehamas (Socrates), Lane (Plato).

Week 2

2. January 11. Homer and Hesiod: Authority and justice as fairness in respect to reciprocity. **Read: *Homer, *Iliad*, books 1, 2, 18; *Hesiod, *Works and Days* (lines 1-382), Balot 16-29.**

CLASS LEADERSHIP SCHEDULING.

3. January 13. Lycurgus and Sparta: Equality as similarity. Virtue as courage. Lyric poetry. The middling tradition, *sophrosune*. Greek state formation. **Read: *Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*. Balot 29-41.**

Additional Reading: **Homer and Hesiod**: Homer rest of *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Hesiod, *Cosmogony*. Morris and Powell 1997 (Companion), Hammer 2002. **Sparta**: Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*. Cartledge 2001, Tiegerstedt 1965.

Week 3

4. January 20. Solon: Law, Immunities, Boundaries. **Read: [Aristotle] *Constitution of Athens*, 1-13, *Plutarch, *Life of Solon*. Balot 41-47.**

Additional Reading. **Solon**: Anhalt 1993, Blok and Lardinois 2006 (Companion)

Week 4

5. January 25. Aeschylus: War, murder, legitimacy, justice, **Read: Aeschylus, *Oresteia*. Balot 48-63.**

6. January 27. Herodotus: Happiness, law, and freedom. **Read: Herodotus, Book 1, Book 3.66-90, Book 5.49-97, Book 7.99-145. Balot 63-85**

Additional Reading: **Tragedy and political theory:** Euben 1986, 1990. **Herodotus:** Bakker et al. 2002 (Companion); Thompson 1996; Munson.

Week 5

7. Feb 1. Democracy. Old Oligarch. Aristophanes. Logic of Athenian system. **Read: [Xenophon] *Constitution of Athens*:**

<http://www6.tlhc.ttu.edu/forsythe/oo.htm>, **Aristophanes, *Assemblywomen*, Balot 86-98.**

8. February 3. Thucydides. Power, modernity v tradition, collective action, civil strife. **Read Thucydides books 1-3.85. Balot 98-158.**

Additional Reading: Aristophanes (other plays), **Aristophanes:** De Luca 2005, Zumbrennen 2006. **Thucydides:** Rengakos and Tsakmakis (Companion), Connor, Crane, Edmunds, Rood, Munn, Price, Orwin.

Week 6

9. February 8. Thucydides. Rhetoric, leadership, decision-making, imperialism. **Read: Thucydides Books 5.63-7, Balot 156-76.**

10. February 10. Plato's Socrates. Harming, law, obedience. Citizenship. **Read: Plato *Apology and Crito*, Balot 177-91.**

Additional Reading: Xenophon, *Apology, Memorabilia*; Plato *Euthyphro, Laches*, **Plato's Socrates:** Kamtekar and Ahbel-Rappe (Companion to Socrates), Kraut 1984, Weiss 1998, Brickhouse, Reeve 1989

Week 7

11. February 17. Protagoras, Gorgias, and other Sophists. *Politikê technê*. **Read: *Plato, *Gorgias* sections 447-86; *Protagoras* sections 309-329, Balot 191-197. FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE.**

Additional Reading: **Sophists:** Antiphon *On Truth*, Gorgias *Helen*, Antisthenes – all in Gagarin and Woodruff and/or in Diehls.

Week 8

12. February 22. Plato: Plato. City and soul. **Read: Plato, *Republic* Books 1-3, Balot 197-209**

13. February 24. Plato's Education of Guardians. **Read: Plato *Republic* Books 4-6. Balot 210-226.**

Additional Reading: **Plato:** Kraut 1992 (Companion), Schofield 2006, Lane, Wallach, Annas, Blondell, Reeve 1988, Monoson, Euben 2003, Kochin, Cooper, Nehamas 1999, Kahn, , Ferrari, Benardete.

Week 9

14. March 1. Plato's Philosopher Kings and nonideal regimes. **Read: Plato *Republic* Books 7-10.**

15. March 3. Demosthenes. *Oration 21: Against Meidias*. Democracy, law, and social class.

Additional Reading: **Plato**: As above, week 8. **Demosthenes**: Wilson, Ober 1996, Fredal, Rowe 1993, MacDowell.

Week 10

16. March 8. Aristotle. Nature, state formation. Natural slavery **Read: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10, *Politics* Books 1-3. Balot 227-247.**

17. March 10. Aristotle. Regime types, “polis of our prayer,” aristocratic democracy. Read Frank. **Read: Aristotle *Politics* Books 6-8. Balot 247-265.**

Additional Reading: **Aristotle**: Kraut 1989, 2002, 2005, Lord 1991a, 1991b, Miller 1995, Nichols, Salkever, Swanson, Murray, Frank, Barnes and Schofield 1995, Lloyd. **Hellenistic**: Balot 265-302, Schofield 1991, 199. Champion, Laks and Schofield 1995, Nussbaum 1994. **Cicero**: Wood 1988, Connolly (forthcoming).

Required textbook

Greek Political Thought

by Ryan K. Balot

Blackwell Publishing, Incorporated (2005) ISBN: 1405100303

Recommended texts:

Aristotle: The Politics and the Constitution of Athens

by Aristotle, Stephen Everson

Cambridge University Press; Rev Std edition (1996) ISBN: 0521484006

Plato Complete Works (Hardcover)

by Plato, John M. Cooper (Editor), D. S. Hutchinson (Editor)

Hackett Publishing Company (May 1997) ISBN: 0872203492

The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War

by Thucydides. Robert B. Strassler (Editor)

Free Press (September 10, 1998) ISBN: 0684827905

Aeschylus I: Oresteia (Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides)

by Aeschylus, David Grene (Editor), Richmond Lattimore (Editor)

University Of Chicago Press (May 15, 1969) ISBN: 0226307786

N.B. some of the required reading is NOT included in the above, and must be found either in the library, on Coursework, or on one of the Internet sites noted below.

Commentaries, Companions, handbooks:

Major Greek authors have been studied intensely for a long time. Classical scholarship is particularly prone to the production of commentaries (e.g. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*: erudite line by line comments on all manner of issues raised by the texts), “companions” (e.g. *Cambridge Companion to Plato*) collections of essays on various

aspects of the work of a given author, period etc., and handbooks. These can be of great help in preparing for class leadership and writing final papers.

Surveys of classical political thought (not required, but helpful)

Barker, Ernest. 1951. *Greek political theory: Plato and his predecessors*. London: Methuen.

Gagarin, Michael, and David Cohen (Eds.). 2005. *The Cambridge companion to ancient Greek law*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rowe, C. J., and Malcolm Schofield. 2000. *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman political thought*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ober, Josiah. 1998. *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

COURSEWORK SITE (for syllabus, some required readings, bibliography, etc.)

Helpful web pages:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection.jsp?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman>

(Perseus Project; Greek and Roman collection. This site has all commonly read texts in classical Greek and Latin literature, in both English in the original. It features a variety of features, including searching, dictionaries, artifact collections. Well worth some time exploring – and a first-choice for texts you do not have in hard copy. The down side is that it is mostly set up to read texts section by section, which can be a bore if the site is receiving a lot of traffic.).

<http://classics.mit.edu/index.html> (MIT Classics text archive: Offers English translations, sometimes only a link to Perseus site, but often a downloadable English translation. Translations vary in quality, but are generally well chosen from works in the public domain. Just about all the literary texts you will want for this course are here.

<http://www2.sfu.ca/nomoi/> (NOMOI site. Very thorough bibliography on all main topics to do with Greek law. Some are very technical, but many will be accessible to you. This is a great resource for gathering bibliography for paper-writing).

<http://www.chs.harvard.edu/wb/62/wo/pZjCn3WfFnC64gvmJCnk0/7.0.0.0.19.1.7.15.1.1.0.1.2.0.0.1.3.3.1> (Center for Hellenic Discussion Series, includes a discussion on Athenian Law in Its Democratic Context. A series of introductory lectures, discussions, list of helpful web resources – great general introduction to the topic and excellent for review as we go along).

<http://www.imprint.co.uk/polis/polis.html>

The web site of *Polis: Journal of the Society for Greek Political Thought*. The only journal completely dedicated to the material covered in this course, although many other journals, e.g. *Political Theory* and *Phronesis*, regularly publish articles Greek political thought and its interpreters.