

Fall, 2009
PHI 399 (11993)
Philosophic Themes: Classical Political Philosophy
Dr. Jack Weinstein
Tues., Thurs.: 12:30 – 1:45
Room: Merrifield 214

Office: M 201C, (701) 277 –2887.

Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., *or by appointment.*

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Texts: Required: Thucydides, *On Justice, Power & Human Nature.* (Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated.) ISBN: 0872201686
Plato, *Republic.* (Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated.) ISBN: 0915144034.
Aristotle, *Politics.* (Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated.) ISBN: 0872203883.
Plato, *Statesman.* (University of Chicago Press.) ISBN: 0226670333
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata & Other Plays (Rev).* (Penguin.) ISBN: 0140448144
Cicero, *Republic and the Laws.* (Oxford University Press.) ISBN: 019954011X

Course Objectives: (1) To introduce students to key texts in early political theory. (2) To determine the relevance of classical political theory to the modern world. (3) To foster written, oral, and comprehension skills required for argumentation and analysis.

Course Description: *Classical Political Philosophy* is designed to do several things simultaneously. As an advanced course in both philosophy and political science, it is designed to introduce students to foundational texts in the tradition that has informed our political thought. It seeks to highlight the classical perspective and to identify and illuminate important themes in political philosophy. Such themes include but are not limited to: human nature, truth, the limits of human knowledge, the role of law, the role of the individual in the *polis*, the purpose of the state, and the place of perfectionism in society.

Second, this course is designed to identify the *impact* of classical writing on the modern world. It asks that students investigate, not only that which political theorists continue to accept, but also that which theorists have consistently rejected. Those conclusions which are no longer adopted tell us as much about our traditions as those conclusions that are consistently reaffirmed. Students in this class are encouraged to articulate those assumptions that justify the rejection of such influential work.

Additionally, this course is geared towards skills-development. It is designed to foster argumentation, writing, comprehension, and oral skills through in-depth reading, writing, and oral assignments. The course emphasizes the critical examinations of selected readings. Students are expected to understand difficult texts and write summaries, comparisons, and criticisms that represent both the philosopher's ideas and the students' own observations about those ideas. Please note: **this is a writing- and reading-intensive class. You will have both writing and reading assignments virtually every single night.**

This course emphasizes reading, understanding, expressing ourselves and listening to others. All students are required to participate in in-class discussions and to respect the opinions of others even if they do not agree with those opinions expressed. This course encourages both independence and inter-dependence. It encourages questioning and the ability of individuals to make up their own mind yet also recognizes the importance of discussion and sharing in learning and thinking. Above all else, this course emphasizes communication within a larger group and hopes to create a community of people who can contribute to and learn from each other's insights and knowledge.

Requirements: Class participation is of the highest priority. This course will not be a success unless everyone in it feels as if they are a part of a larger whole. It is expected that all members of the class keep up to date with the assignments, take an interest in the opinions and arguments of others and, as a result, students will be graded on participation.

Students are required to complete nightly journals summarizing and commenting on the readings assigned in class. The week's journals will be collected every Thursday. Students are also required to complete all papers listed on the

syllabus. Late papers will only be accepted in special circumstances. Please speak with me about lateness or attendance problems in advance.

Grading: The grading formula is as follows:

Papers 1-2:	25%.
Final Paper:	20%.
Journals:	25%.
<u>Class Participation (includes bulletin board posts):</u>	<u>30%.</u>
Total:	100 points.

Letter grades will be converted to a 100 point scale, in which 95 = A, 87 = B+, 85 = B, 83 = B-, etc.

Perhaps a more useful way of thinking about the grades is: A = excellent or outstanding work, B = good or above average work, C = acceptable or average work, D = unsatisfactory work but it is “just squeaking by,” and F = unsatisfactory or failing work. By definition, most work is “average.” Papers will be graded on: clarity of focus, adequacy of text, breadth and depth of documentation, cogency of argument.

All written work must be typed. No handwritten work will be accepted.

How to get an ‘A’ in this course: This course is difficult; it requires both a lot of work and a significant personal commitment (all classes *should* require this). You should anticipate at least three hours of out-of-class work for every hour you spend in class. Written work should be detailed and well edited, with a strong sense of academic discipline evident in the assignment. ‘A’ students notate their textbooks both when they read and during class discussion. They also take notes during the lecture and refer to these notes when completing assignments. To get an ‘A’, a student must participate actively in the majority of classes, and write detailed journals that integrate the personal point of view with textual analysis. If someone has questions about his or her overall grade, I will ask to see his or her notes and study material. Without textbook notations, lecture notes, lengthy journals, active participation, and, of course, the completion of all assignments, it is unlikely that someone can earn a high grade.

Participation Policy: The pre-requisite for participation is, of course, being present to participate. An ‘A’ in class participations signifies frequent, substantive, and meaningful participation in the class indicative of thoughtful and disciplined interaction with the texts, If you have other commitments, family issues, or personal problems, please come see me and we can discuss your options.

Note: Absences are not extensions; all deadlines still apply. If you know you are going to be absent, please give me all the required work *in advance* or e-mail your assignments before class ends. **No late assignments will be accepted unless we have spoken and I have agreed to an extension.** Simply informing me that your paper is going to be late does not constitute my consent.

Discussion Days: Discussion days occur either one or two class sessions before the day papers number two and three are due. They are set aside for group work so that you can talk amongst yourselves about your papers. How should you start? What have you done so far? What ideas are you exploring? The purpose of discussion days is to help you write better papers. I recommend that you come to class with an outline or an early draft that you can bounce off of your colleagues. The more you prepare, the better grades you will end up getting. **IMPORTANT:** Discussion days are not free days. Do not be absent. If large numbers of people skip class then I will be forced to lecture instead of allowing group-time.

Rewrites: You will have the opportunity to re-write as many papers and journals as the semester schedule allows (final papers, obviously, cannot be rewritten). All rewrites are due within one week after the first version is returned. **When submitting the rewrite, please hand in both the original paper as well. I cannot grade rewrites that are not accompanied by the original paper.** NOTE: If you do not hand in a completed paper on time, you forfeit the opportunity to submit a rewrite. Always hand in a paper, even if you are unsatisfied with the quality.

Journals: Write a journal on the reading assigned. The journal is due the day the reading is scheduled for discussion, although I only collect them on Thursdays. **Journals should be written before class discussion.** Each journal entry should be at least 450 words long, but this is a *minimum* length and, in conjunction with other factors, does not guarantee anything above the *minimum* satisfactory grade. The first half should include a summary of the main idea

of the reading. The second half of the journal should be your reaction. Is the argument a good one? Are there mistakes in reasoning? How does this connect with other readings? Did the reading upset you? Are there problems to be solved? Is there something you don't understand, or would like to spend more time on? Include any questions or other comments you have about the reading. The journals will be graded on a three point scale: 3= Excellent, 2=Good, 1=Acceptable. Your journal grades will be averaged at the end of the semester. There are sample journals on my web page. **Unless I indicate otherwise, journals are only required for days in which there are reading assignments. There are, for example, no journals required for discussion day.**

Bulletin Board Posts: Every student must post at least one message on the class-specific bulletin board per week. The message must be at least a short paragraph, and must be substantive, relating to something discussed in class that week. You may respond to other posts or you may start a new thread, but you must make a genuine attempt to engage in the community of inquiry present on the board. **Please print out and submit a copy of your post each week. Posts that are not submitted will not be counted for credit.**

No anonymous postings are permitted. Please sign the board with your first name and last initial.

The Web Page: I have developed an interactive World Wide Web page that I hope will make things easier for you throughout the semester. It contains links to sites that will help you write your papers, take better notes, and understand the text better. It also contains discussion boards so that you can post questions, comments, and suggestion for your colleagues. My intention is to provide a 24-hour support group that adds depth to our in-class time and makes you feel less isolated when you are doing work outside of class. I hope that this will be the first place you go to when you are having difficulties, or when you are simply "inspired" and want to talk philosophy. The web page address is as follows: <http://www.und.nodak.edu/instruct/weinstei/>

A password is required for the course-specific discussion board. It will be announced in class and via e-mail.

Grading Rubrics: Each paper you submit must include a grading rubric as a cover sheet (with your name on it). There are separate ones for the journals and your papers. You are responsible for printing them out and attaching them *to the front* of your paper. Papers without rubrics will not be graded.

General comments: All of the journal entries are considered to be foundational work contributing to the larger papers. All of the early papers are considered to be foundational work for the later papers. Consequently, you are encouraged to use these entries as much as possible in order to organize your thoughts and arguments. This means that if you feel something that you have written in a journal or earlier paper can be used within a different assignment, you are encouraged to use it again. Remember, you cannot plagiarize off your own work— only other people's work.

- Do not plagiarize. The university defines plagiarism as "the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another person's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own work." If you are unsure of what that means, speak with me. When in doubt, use citations. **All acts of plagiarism will result in immediate failure for the course.** Plagiarism includes but is not limited to copying work from other students. You are encouraged to talk in groups about your assignments; I hope that students form study groups to attack the reading and the papers. However, when it is time to write the papers, do your work on your own. Do not write collectively. Should two or more students hand in the same or unacceptably similar papers, both the writer and those who copied the work will be subject to the consequences. In short, all written work must be your own. *I have failed many people for plagiarism. Don't do it. It's not worth the risk.*

- Students who are absent are responsible for all work and all announcements made while they were absent. The syllabus is not a contract. I may add, take-away, or change assignments when I think it necessary. Additionally, I may change deadlines, so make sure you know what you missed while you were absent. All the new rules will apply, even if you are unaware that things have changed.

- Avoid sloppy or careless mistakes. Spell the names of the philosophers correctly. I become very frustrated when I read people who do not care enough about their papers to edit properly. You don't want a frustrated professor grading your paper – that would be a very bad thing.

- Please be sure to keep copies of everything you hand me, either on disk or as a photocopy. I am a human being. Sometimes I lose things. If, for whatever reason, I misplace your paper, or I think you never gave it to me, these

copies will resolve the issue.

- If you are having difficulties, or if you are falling behind, come see me. I have office hours for a reason, and I am almost always willing to arrange a one-on-one meeting. E-mail is also a useful way of contacting me. I cannot help you if you don't let me know you need help. No one has ever been penalized for asking for help. In fact, students who come see me often find it to be an advantage. There is no reason to be scared of me. I really am quite harmless, even though I am loud and flail while I talk.

- As an extension of the previous comment, do not come to me three weeks before the end of the semester to ask what you can do to pass this course. The grade for this course is a semester long evaluative measure. At that point, there is little I can do. Don't let it get that far. See me early with any difficulties. Remember, I don't give you a grade; you earn it.

- **Electronic Communication** - My Webpage contains all the course handouts; please go there to download them and print them out to bring to class. Also, make sure that Campus Connection has your current e-mail address. Announcements and links will be sent electronically via that service, and you are responsible for receiving them even if you have not updated your account. Finally, for class related matters, it is best to communicate with me via my UND email address rather than my Facebook account. I have no objections to being friended, having you write on my wall, or receiving messages there, but I don't check it as often. Facebook is for fun and my UND address is my *official* account. It is best to conduct class business there.

- **Students with disabilities:** Individuals with physical, psychological, or learning disabilities, should contact Disability Support Services in McConnel Hall (777 – 3425 – voice or TTY). It is the student's responsibility to request accommodations. I cannot provide accommodations that are not requested in writing from Disability Support Services.

- **Students for whom English is a second language:** I will make every attempt to work with you so that you meet the requirements of this class. However, you will be held responsible for writing understandable and grammatically correct papers. Contact the academic services below for academic assistance.

- **Students requiring writing assistance or tutoring:** Help is available free of charge through the University Learning Center at the Memorial Union room 201A (777 – 4406), or the Writing Center in Merrifield Hall, room 12 (777 – 3600).

- Discussions in this class will not shy away from controversy. Students are encouraged to discuss any topic that is relevant to the course. It is therefore not uncommon for issues relating to current events, human sexuality, religion, drugs, politics, race, and gender to be our focus. It is also quite common that students will disagree with each other or with me. Although each person is expected to show the proper respect for his or her colleagues, students will not be discouraged from discussing relevant topics that may be offensive to others. Consequently, if such topics make you uncomfortable, or if you are concerned about being offended, you may want to reconsider taking this course.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

Don't forget to attach the relevant grading rubric to each assignment.
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Reading and Assignment Schedule:

Tuesday, August 25: Introduction, Administrative Details, Syllabus, etc.

Thursday, August 27: **Read:** Thucydides, “Early History and Method” and “Origins of the War”, pp. 1 – 37.

Tuesday, September 1: **Read:** Thucydides: “Pericles and the Plague” and “Justice and Power: Platea and Mytilene”, pp. 39 – 87.

Thursday, September 3: **Read:** Thucydides: “Human Nature Laid bare in Civil War” and “Justice and Power: Acanthus and Melos”, pp 89 – 109.

Tuesday, September 8: **Read:** Thucydides: “The Sicilian Expedition” and “Aftermath of the Sicilian Expedition”, pp. 111 – 160.

Thursday, September 10: **Read:** Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*.

Tuesday, September 15: **Re-read:** Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*.

Thursday, September 17: Discussion Day:

Tuesday, September 22: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book I.

Due: Paper 1: “Were the Athenians Acting in Accordance with Justice?” (5-7 pages).

As a historian, Thucydides is only occasionally explicit in his judgment regarding the morality of the Peloponnesian war. Determine whether or not Thucydides believed the war to be just, and whether or not he regarded it as worthwhile. Were the Athenians acting justly in his opinion? Be explicit in your evidence. Were the Athenians acting justly in *your* opinion? Be explicit in your argumentation. Does *Lysistrata* shed light on the war? If so, how?

*The purpose of this paper is to derive evidence for moral principles from particular situations. It asks that you judge history and defend your judgment. Ultimately, this paper rests on a clarification of the conditions that make a war just. Is it ever acceptable to initiate a war? Is it ever acceptable to break a treaty? As readers of history, we know the outcome of the war, yet the Athenians did not. Does the resolution of the war make any difference regarding our judgment? Are the Athenians more or less just because they were unaware of the war's outcome? And, if *Lysistrata* is right, and the Athenians ultimately wanted to go to war, does that change your judgment?*

Thursday, September 24: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book II.

Tuesday, September 29: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book III.

Thursday, October 1: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book IV.

Tuesday, October 6: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book V.

Thursday, October 8: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book VI.

Tuesday, October 13: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book VII.

Thursday, October 15: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII.

Tuesday, October 20: **Read:** Plato, *Republic*, Book IX and IX.

Thursday, October 22: **Read:** Plato: Statesman.

Tuesday, October 27: **Re-Read:** Plato: Statesman.

Thursday, October 29: **Read:** Aristophanes, The Clouds.

Tuesday, November 3: Discussion Day.

Thursday, November 5: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I & II.

Due: Paper 2: “Is knowledge an appropriate source of political authority?” (6-8 pages).

Plato defines justice in terms of a hierarchical organization of the city-state. A just state is one that is governed by those who have access to the Good, in this case, the Philosopher-Kings. Is this a fair distribution of power? Is the guarantee of good decision making more important than equality of opportunity? Is Plato’s criticism of democracy convincing?

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the considerations inherent in a definition of justice. What and who do we take into account when we define such a term. What is the purpose of the state? Should the state be regarded as an association of individuals or should it be regarded as an entity unto itself. This paper requires that you give the classical absence of individual rights the benefit of the doubt. Some people are simply more capable of making policy decisions than others. Should we not take a person’s capabilities into account before we allow them to participate in decisions that effect all members of society?

Tuesday, November 10: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III.

Thursday, November 12: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV.

Tuesday, November 17: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V & VI.

Thursday, November 19: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII.

Tuesday, November 24: **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VIII

Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving Day, No class.

Tuesday, December 1: Cicero, Republic, TBA

Thursday, December 3: Cicero, Republic, TBA

Tuesday, December 8: Cicero, Republic, TBA

Thursday, December 10: Discussion Day.

Final Paper, due at scheduled exam time: Tuesday, December 15, 1 p.m.

Choose one theme that we have discussed throughout the semester but has not been the subject of any of the previous papers. Ask a question about it and attempt to answer the question (that will be the title of the paper). Show how the theme has developed over time. Enumerate the philosophers opinions and arguments pertaining to that theme and determine who you agree with and why.

*This paper is both exposition and opinion. It asks that you isolate a particular strand within the larger conversation and interpret what you think the more subtle conclusions of our six philosophers have been. Finally, it asks you to determine which position is both the most convincing, and whether or not these conclusions are transferable to the modern world. **Ultimately, this paper asks you to determine what lessons we can learn from the ancient texts we have studied.** What can contemporary political theorists preserve? What should they discard and why? (10 – 15 pages)*