



SYLLABUS SUMMARY

Political Philosophy I

POL 317 Section 01

Class

Semester Fall 2023
Course Length 16 weeks
Credit Hours 3
Course Location Welder 108
Course Schedule Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 1-1:50pm

Instructor

Instructor Kevin Walker, Ph.D.
Office Hours Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 11-12; Thursdays, 3:30-5
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Course Description

Socrates of ancient Athens was responsible for bringing philosophy down from the heavens and into the city, making the eternal things present, in a face-to-face challenge to politics. For this, he was executed. Philosophy, after all, means a love of wisdom, but it is a kind of wisdom that politics has no time or patience to understand. Philosophy doubts and asks questions for the sake of finding eternal truths, but the political community needs is an Answer – an authoritative, unquestioned, divinely-approved law, or an ancestral custom that tells the people how to live. Why seek the Truth when the city already knows its *own* truth that works well enough for itself? Still, every major philosopher agreed with Socrates that philosophy might do the greatest good for the city – *if* citizens were capable of receiving it. If they were educated to have well-ordered souls, to love what was good and true, and were accustomed to living noble and upright lives of virtue, then philosophy was not a danger but the greatest gift the city could ever receive; it could be the capstone of their virtues, shape politics into justice, and become the noblest activity of free people. In this course, we will examine the first have of Western political philosophy, from ancient Greece through the Italian Renaissance, and consider the ways political philosophy might continue to shape our own public life for the better.

Texts

A liberal education is made up primarily of books. Therefore, *book* editions of the following texts are *required* in order to keep alive an ancient tradition of reading, thinking and writing – not only for this class, but for the rest of your life.

Plato. *Gorgias*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN# 0199540322.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. ISBN# 0226921840.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *The Republic and the Laws*. Translated by Niall Rudd. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN# 019954011X.

Augustine. *Political Writings*. Translated by Ernest L. Fortin and Douglas Kries. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994. ISBN# 0872202100.

Aquinas, Thomas. *De Regno: On Kingship*. Divine Providence Press, 2014. ISBN# 069235400X.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Selected Political Writings*. Translated by David Wooton. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994.

Expectations

- **Participation and Attendance (10%)**. Come to class every day and be prepared to discuss the assigned reading based on the Reading Questions that will be passed out each week. Contact the professor as soon as possible for excused absences. Each unexcused or unexplained absence will result in the loss of a percentage point.
- **Discussion Questions (20%)**. Present one side or the other of a key debate covered in class. There will be a sign-up sheet.
- **Little Essay (20%)**. A 3-5 page essay on the first part of class. There will be a prompt.
- **Big Essay (25% -- 10%; 15%)**. A 5–6-page essay comparing two views on a topic of your choice. It will be due in two drafts. There will be a prompt.
- **Presentations (5%)**. Short presentations at the end of the semester on your Big Essay.
- **Final Exam (20%)**. A comprehensive exam on the material covered this semester. There will be a prompt.

All late assignments will receive no higher than a B+ unless other arrangements are made by contacting the professor with a specific explanation.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to read the [University of Mary's Academic Honor Code and Honor System](#) and abide by all the standards of conduct and requirements contained therein. When a student is in doubt about whether or not an action might constitute an Academic Honor Code violation, s/he should request clarification from the instructor *before* the action in question is undertaken. The Academic Honor Code is available for review on my.umary.edu under the General University Policies link. To clarify: *Cheating* is copying one's own notes (e.g., a cheat-sheet) or someone else's exam. *Plagiarism* is copying text you did not write without proper citation as if it was your own, whether it is from online or from another essay.

Artificial Intelligence

The whole purpose of AI software like ChatGPT is to generate fake text. There is therefore absolutely no reason for using AI software for this course. Use of these tools is strictly prohibited, and all assignments will be carefully screened by TurnItIn.com and ZeroGPT.com. Students will be notified about all incidents and offered a chance to explain, but their submission will be reported to the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Technology

For all its uses, certain attitudes toward technology threaten to overwhelm everything distinctly human in us and replace our best qualities with machine functions. This class is focused on preserving humanity. Everything you need to know will be in the assigned texts, the classroom discussions, and your own reasoning and personal insights, meaning there is no need for laptops in class unless you have an accommodation.

Reasonable Accommodations

The University of Mary, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and in the spirit of our mission, offers support for disabled students who provide required documentation. Students with disabilities who need accommodations should apply to the [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#). For further information, contact Dr. Lynn Dodge, coordinator of Student Accessibility Services, in the Student Success Center (lower level of Welder Library) at (701) 355-8264 or ljdodge@umary.edu.

Excused Absence Policy

The University has a policy on excused absences related to sponsored/sanctioned activities and events. The policy is available for review online. Students participating in such activities and events are expected to review this policy and comply with it. As long as appropriate prior notification is given according to this policy, students and faculty reach a mutual agreement concerning make-up work, and students complete the work in question, faculty shall not penalize a student for missing a class or exam when they were granted an excused absence from the university. Any questions concerning the policy may be referred to the course instructor who may refer the question to the athletic director, student activities director, or academic affairs for response.

Channel for Communication Relating to this Course

Aside from the instructor, students may report or appeal decisions to: Dr. Mark Springer, Department Chair (mmspringer@umary.edu); Dr. David Tamisiea, Dean of Arts and Sciences (datamisica@umary.edu).

Benedictine Values

Each of the Benedictine values – hospitality, service, community, moderation, respect for persons, and prayer – are emphasized at different points throughout the course in discussing the pursuit of the common good. Still, a political philosophy course is focused on two:

- **Community.** All human communities are political in some way or another. As Aristotle taught, we are “political animals,” meaning that whenever any group of people tries to live together, they will get political. Like all aspects of our human nature – our bodies, our minds, our relationships, our fine art, etc. – politics is meant to be a glorious reflection of the image of God in us; like all of those things, it too is corrupted by sin. Our response should be to discern its original glory and become agents of redeeming our political life. This class will offer the tools to help us do that, whether as public officials or as private citizens.
- **Respect for Persons.** Any just political order depends entirely on the acceptance of the dignity of the human person. It is the standard we appeal to every time we get angry: complaints about injustice are themselves revelations of justice that exists by nature. It is Jesus Christ's maxim to “do under others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12); the Declaration of Independence's claim that it is “self-evident that all men are created equal”; Abraham Lincoln's statement that “as I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master” (Fragment from c. 1858); or Martin Luther King's observation that “[a]ny law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust” (Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963).

Course Outline

Students are required to read the following readings for each day of class. If classes get behind schedule, we will just continue in order of the readings.

I. Plato, *Gorgias*

September 6

Introduction

September 8

Socrates and Gorgias (pp. 3-23)

September 11

Socrates and Polus Part 1 (pp. 23-39)

September 13

Socrates and Polus Part 2 (39-62)

September 15

Socrates and Callicles Part 1 (pp. 62-78)

September 18

Socrates and Callicles Part 2 (78-102)

September 20

Socrates and Callicles Part 3 (pp. 102-125)

September 22

Conclusion (pp. 125-135)

II. Aristotle, *Politics*

September 25

Book 1 (pp. 35-54)

September 27

Book 3 (pp. 86-117)

September 29

Book 4, Chapters 1-10 (pp. 118-132)

October 2

Book 4, Chapters 11-16 (pp. 132-146)

October 4

Book 5, Chapters 1-10 (pp. 147-167); Book 6, Chapters 1-5 (pp. 182-190)

October 6

Book 7 (pp. 197-228); Book 8 (pp. 197-241)

III. Cicero, *The Republic* and *The Laws*

October 9

Republic, Book 1 (pp. 3-34)

October 11

Republic, Book 2 (pp. 35-59)

October 13

Fall Break – No Class

October 16

Republic, Book 3 (pp. 60-80)

October 18

Republic, Books 4-6 (pp. 81-94)

October 20

Laws, Book 1 (pp. 97-120)

Little Essay Due October 20

IV. Augustine, *City of God*

October 23

Books I-IV (pp. 3-29)

October 25

Community Learning Day – No Classes

October 27

Books V-VII (pp. 30-57)

October 30

Books VIII-XI (pp. 58-82)

November 1

Books XII-XIV (pp. 83-109)

November 3

Books XV-XX (pp. 110-139)

November 6

Book XIX (pp. 140-163)

November 8

Books XX-XXI (pp. 164-183)

November 10

Book XXII (pp. 183-201)

V. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship*

November 13

Book I, Chapters 1-8 (pp. 5-44)

November 15

Chapters 8-14 (pp. 44-87)

November 17

Chapters 15-16, and Book II (88-120)

Big Essay Part 1 Due November 17

VI. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*

November 20

Letter to Francisco Vettori; *The Prince* (pp. 1-21)

November 22

The Prince (pp. 21-42)

November 24

Thanksgiving – No Classes

November 27

The Prince (pp. 42-63)

November 29

The Prince (63-80)

December 1

Discourses (pp. 81-105)

December 4

Discourses (pp. 105-129)

December 6

Discourses (pp. 129-158)

December 8

Discourses (pp. 158-217)

Big Essay Final Draft Due December 8

Presentations, Discussion and Review

December 11

Presentations

December 13

Presentations

Final Exam – Monday, December 18, 1-3pm