

Classics of Social and Political Thought—I

SOSC 15100-14

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Office Hours: M 3-4.30

Room: Harper Memorial 102
Section 12: M/W 1.30-2.50
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Course Description & Aims

This sequence of the Classics core is our introduction to ‘social and political thought.’ Perhaps it may also afford an opportunity to *think* in a way that is ‘social’ or ‘political’. We will ask after this question, What does it mean to ‘think’ politically and socially as an activity that we may undertake and as exemplified in ‘classic’ texts like those we will engage? With these questions in mind, this initial section will focus on developing and refining analytical skills such as close-reading practices, elegantly structured argumentation, and interpretive generosity. Our shared purpose is to develop these skills in relation to a variety of very complex and stylistically varied historical texts. As this is a collaborative effort participating in class discussion is essential. The same interpretative generosity we cultivate in relation to our texts we will exercise in relation to one another.

Required Texts

These books are all available for purchase from the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore. You are required to use these editions of the texts; other editions may use very different translations, which make it difficult for us to coordinate discussion. All additional readings are available via Chalk in PDF format. You should *print hard copies* of these readings and bring them with you to class.

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1991)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1998)

Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. & ed. William P. Baumgarth & Richard J. Regan, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2003)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Overview of Course Requirements

Writing Requirements

You will submit one short writing assignment and one longer paper. The first paper will be roughly 2 - 3 pages (no more than 1000 words), while the final paper will be about 5 - 6 pages (2000-2500 words). For both the first and second writing assignments, I will facilitate an optional draft exchange, in which you exchange drafts with another student and provide feedback to each other. You are **strongly** encouraged to participate. I will provide more information about these assignments as they approach.

Participation in Class Discussion

You must attend every class and be an active participant in discussion. Being prepared to participate means that you need to do the assigned reading, of course, but it also means that you must bring your copy of the text and your notes on it to each class. Participating actively in class means contributing your own comments and questions to the discussion. Everyone should be contributing every week. Don't be afraid to say something that might be wrong or that you're unsure about; what you say will likely advance the discussion anyway. If, after a couple weeks, you find that you are uncomfortable participating in group discussions, please let me know so that we can discuss possible remedies.

Posting Reading Questions

To facilitate participation, you will be required to post a question about the day's reading on your section's Chalk discussion board by midnight before each class session. Reading questions should explicitly engage with some part of the text by citing a particular passage or concept (along with relevant page numbers) and asking something specific about it.

Though we will all surely be confused in places, simply noting some difficulty is not enough. In other words, "What does the author mean here?" is not a good question; a better question takes a form like "When the author says X, does he mean this?" where you provide a candidate interpretation.

To facilitate discussion, four of your posts this quarter should be responses to a question posed by another student. You can skip any two days of posting/responding before it affects your class participation grade.

Grades

Reflecting the importance of the seminar format, 40% of your grade will be class participation, which includes the quality of your posted discussion questions. The first paper is worth 20% of your grade and the final paper makes up the final 40%. Papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (i.e., a B+ becomes a B). Extensions will be granted only in the case of documented illnesses or personal emergencies.

I do not accept papers more than 3 days late.

Because of the importance of attendance, absences will be excused only in documented cases of illness, personal emergency, or religious observance. After the first unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of one full letter grade from your participation grade.

Obligatory Notice about Plagiarism (with additional note about the Internet)

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If you have any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me, or refer to Charles Lipson's *How to Do Honest Work in College* (2004). Proven plagiarism can lead to automatic failure of

the course and will be referred to the University administration for additional sanctions.

Even those of you who have no intention of plagiarizing will sometimes use Google and Wikipedia to do some preliminary reading before writing your papers. I strongly recommend that you not do this since it will lead you to write less interesting papers. Drawing your understanding of the thinkers we read from such secondary sources leads to papers that are marred by poor use of the actual text and that do not engage fully with the particular question asked.

Laptop Policy/Scribe

The convenience of computer use is subordinated to the aims of the course. To the extent that your laptop helps you to participate in class discussion, you are welcome to use it. Of course, that means internet use of any kind is prohibited. In addition, students who use their computers in class will be required to post the notes taken during class onto Chalk immediately following class. If you are not willing to do this, please do not bring a computer with you.

The exception to this policy is the rotating position of class scribe.

Fall Quarter Reading Schedule

Week One

Monday: 9/30 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. I

Wednesday: 10/2 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. II

Week Two

Monday: 10/7 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. III

Wednesday: 10/9 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. IV

Week Three

Monday: 10/14 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. V

Wednesday: 10/16 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. VI **Draft Exchange Papers Due**

Week Four

Monday: 10/21 **Draft Exchange Edits Back**

Plato, *Republic*, Bk. VII

Wednesday: 10/23 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. VIII **First Writing Assignment Due**

Week Five

Monday: 10/28 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. IX

Wednesday: 10/30 Plato, *Republic*, Bk. X

Week Six

Monday: 11/4 Aristotle, *Politics*. Book I chapters 1-7, 12-13; Book II chapters 1-5, 7-8

Wednesday: 11/6 Aristotle, *Politics*. Book III

Week Seven

Monday: 11/11 Aristotle, *Politics*. Book IV chapters 1-2, 4-9, 11, 12; Book V chapters 1, 5-9; Book VI chapter 5

Wednesday: 11/13 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII chapters 1-5, 7, 9-10, 13-15; Book VIII chapter 1

Week Eight

Monday 11/18 Alfarabi, *The Political Regime* (Chalk)

Wednesday 11/20 **2nd Paper Topics Out**

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II Questions 90-95 (pp. 10-59), Q. 96 & Q. 97 (pp. 59-75); Q. 100 A. 1, 2, 8-9 (pp. 76-79, 81-86); Q. 105 A. 1 (pp. 93-96); II-II Q. 57 A. 2-4 (pp. 100-105); Q. 58 A. 2 (pp. 107-108); Q. 40 A. 1 (pp. 164-167); Q. 104 A. 5-6 (pp. 182-185); Q. 42 A. 2 (pp. 188-189); Q. 10 A. 8, 11, Q. 11 A. 3, *Commentary on the Sentences* 44, 37 (pp. 190-196); *On Kingship* I 6 (pp. 207-210)

Week Nine

Monday 11/25 Machiavelli, letter to Vettori of December 10, 1513 (in *The Prince*, 107-111) *The Prince* Dedicatory Letter & Chapters I-VI; *Discourses on Livy* Dedicatory Letter, I Preface, 9-10, 19-20, 58, II 2, III 30.1 (Chalk)

Wednesday 11/27 **Draft Exchange Papers Due**

Prince Chapters VII-XIV; *Discourses* I 11-12, 18.4, 27

Week Ten

Monday 12/2 *Prince* Chapters XV-XIX; *Discourses* III 40-42 **Draft Exchange Edits Back**

Wednesday 12/4

Prince Chapters XX-XXVI; *Discourses* III 9

Week Eleven

Monday 12/9–**Final Paper Due**