

PHILOSOPHY 244

**HISTORY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:
CLASSICAL VISIONS**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will be, in part, an introductory survey of ancient and medieval Western social and political philosophy and, in part, the first of an optional two-block sequence constituting a historically informed inquiry into the problem of understanding contemporary democratic life. Some contemporary writers have argued that, when judged against the backdrop of a tradition of thought descended from Plato, our age is one of moral decay, intellectual decline, and political disarray, while others assert that the contemporary era is characterized by democratic ways of living that have the potential to make our lives rich morally, intellectually, and politically. PH 244 will explore the origins of Western understandings of politics, democracy, and philosophy in ancient Greece and Rome, with some exploration of the adaptation of classical ideals in medieval European. Combined with PH 245's exploration of modern political thought, the two courses will explore how and why such opposing interpretations of democratic life have arisen, concentrating especially on what reasonable and unreasonable claims each position entails and why one may or may not come to support either position.

Alberto Lemus-Hernandez will offer PH 245 in block 5. Students who enroll in and complete both courses this year will satisfy the College's West in Time distribution requirement. Note that students who complete PH 244 this year and then take PH 245 in a subsequent year will not receive West in Time credit.

COURSE GOALS

The primary aim of the two courses will be to give students an overview of Western social and political philosophy, focusing on key classical and modern texts. Over the two blocks, we will focus on five historical moments in the history of Western philosophy and politics: the ancient Athenian democratic polis; the classical Roman and Christian receptions of and amendments to Greek philosophy and politics; the early modern constitutional state; the modern liberal market order; and contemporary pluralist republics. In each section of the course, we will examine two or more competing philosophical treatises that question the then-dominant understandings of society and politics, claim to establish some better or truer interpretation of organized human life, and suggest means for reforming or transforming society and politics in light of that interpretation. Topics to be discussed may include: the problem of truth and the role of justice in politics; the questions of whether natural laws can be identified and of what roles or obligations common people might have in constitutional states; the difficulties of understanding the social and political significance of individuality and the place of equal rights or common goods in the social order; and the problematic roles of intellectuals, patriotism, eroticism, and diversity in democratic orders. The exact topics examined, however, will be shaped by the questions raised in our discussions.

This block will introduce students to the writings of several influential classical political and philosophical thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and Pizan. The next block will focus on modern Western thinkers.

In addition to giving an overview of classical social and political philosophy in the West, the course's historical inquiry will provide the class with historical and philosophical tools useful for examining a contemporary problem that may be as old as any Western tradition of thought: the possible conflict between rational order and democratic expression. To some, including thinkers as ancient as Plato and as

recent as Allan Bloom, democracy poses threats to order and reason; while to others, including in some ways Aristotle, as well as modern thinkers like Rousseau or Richard Rorty, citizen participation and public deliberation promise to make the notion of democratic order a living reality. This course will seek to encourage students to look closely at all sides of such arguments and to begin thinking about what democracy may mean, whether in ancient or modern contexts.

Throughout the term, the course will offer students opportunities to develop their own critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading. This course will have a heavy yet quite rewarding reading list. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the block. Plan to spend a fair amount of time reading *before* attending class and, at times, re-reading after class. In general, texts are to be brought to our meetings so that they may be referred to in our discussions.

Course Meetings and Discussion. Most course meetings will consist largely of discussion, with some lecturing from time to time. Individual students may be assigned to lead discussions or to take part in debates on particular topics periodically. Students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually; and to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner. Performance in discussions will strongly influence the participation grade.

Writing and Examinations. Students will write two short papers, which are to be typed (i.e., word-processed), double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Unexcused late papers will be downgraded one step every four hours tardy. In addition, each student will write three 1-2 page short summary and reaction papers, as described at the end of this syllabus. Each student will be assigned to a group, with a required paper once every week or so.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Most of these readings are available on two-hour reserve at Tutt Library. In a few cases only somewhat similar editions are available. All have been ordered by the Colorado College Bookstore.

Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell (Hackett, 1992). ISBN: 9780872200944.

Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1992). ISBN: 9780872201361.

Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1998). ISBN: 9780872203884.

Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Republic and The Laws*, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford, 1998). ISBN: 9780199540112.

Augustine of Hippo, *Political Writings*, trans. Michael W. Tkacs and Douglas Kries (Hackett, 1994). ISBN: 9780872202108.

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, trans. Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge, 1994). ISBN: 9780521422598.

ADDITIONAL READINGS – ON THE COURSE PROWL SITE

Aristotle, selections from *Physics* (eBooks@Adelaide, 2005) <<http://www.library.adelaide.edu.au>>

Holy Bible: English Standard Version, selections from Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, and 1 Corinthians (The Standard Bible Society) <<http://www.esv.org>>

St. Augustine of Hippo, “The Miseries to Which the First Sins Has Exposed Mankind...,” *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, chap. 22 (Penguin Classics, 1972, 1984)

Sheldon S. Wolin, selection from “The Early Christian Era: Time and Vision,” in *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, chap. 4, pp. 117-131 (Little, Brown, & Co., 1960)

Other supplemental readings may also be assigned as the block unfolds. All additional and supplemental readings will be available as in digital form on the course’s PROWL site:

<https://prowl.coloradocollege.edu/course/view.php?id=2372>

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Grades will be assigned on a 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner:

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| 1. First paper draft/workshop (4-5 pages) | Wed., 7 Dec./Thurs., 8 Dec. | 2% |
| 2. First paper (4-5 pages) | Fri., 9 Dec. | 29% |
| 3. Second paper draft/workshop (5-6 pp.) | Thurs., 20 Dec. | 2% |
| 4. Second paper (5-6 pages) | Wed., 21 Dec. | 34% |
| 7. Four reaction papers (2 pages each) | Varies | 8% |
| 8. Participation | | <u>25%</u> |
| TOTAL: | | 100% |

Regular, timely attendance and active participation in discussion are essential parts of the course – worth 25% of your final grade. Unexcused absences and regular tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. Students who miss three classes for any reason may be required to withdraw from the course. If you have a good reason to be absent or late, notify me as soon as possible. Be sure to write a note (so that I remember!), as well as to speak to me.

The schedule of assignments appears above and below. You will be expected to meet all of these deadlines. Exceptions will be made only in extreme and unavoidable circumstances. If you expect to submit a paper late, contact me immediately. Either see me in my office, or give me a note or an e-mail message explaining your circumstances. If religious observances or other serious obligations conflict with the course schedule, let me know as soon as possible, and we can work out an alternate schedule for you.

Plan to attend class for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. “Attending for the whole period” means, among other things, that you will not leave class to visit the restroom, get a drink of water, chat with friends, and the like. We will take a break about after about an hour and 15 minutes – that is when you may leave class (except in an emergency, of course). If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving early, please notify me in advance. ***As a courtesy to all, please turn off all telephones while in class. You may use a notebook computer, if you promise both not to surf the web during class and to make regular eye contact with the class.***

HONOR CODE

Students will be expected to abide by the Honor Code. Among other things, the Honor Code specifies that you will be responsible for producing all of your own work and that you will always cite the works or ideas of others used in your work. However, discussing your ideas and your writing with others is *not* a violation of the Honor Code. In fact, it is a good idea to compare your ideas and writings with those of others and to ask others for criticisms of your work. Using other people’s ideas can also be a good idea – ***if*** their ideas are good ***and*** you credit the authors for developing the ideas.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you believe you are eligible for learning accommodations as the result of a qualified disability, please contact me privately. If you believe you may have a disability that impacts learning, and you have not self-identified to the College’s Disabilities Services Office, please do so immediately. I will make appropriate learning accommodations in accordance with the Disabilities Service Office’s instructions. You will find their office in the Colket Student Learning Center at 152 Tutt Library. You may also contact the College’s learning consultant, Jan Edwards, at the Learning Center, at 227-8285, or by visiting this site:

<http://www.coloradocollege.edu/learningcommons/academicsupport/disability.asp>

OFFICE HOURS/COMMUNICATION

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3 p.m. I am also generally in my office (124 Armstrong) in the afternoon. The easiest way to meet with me would be to make an appointment after class, or contact me via e-mail (dmcennerney@coloradocollege.edu). I can also be reached at my office phone (extension 6564).

Note that this entire syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: All assignments are to be completed *before* class.

Class will meet from 9:20 a.m. to about 11:45 a.m., with a 15-minute break, unless otherwise indicated.

* Indicates electronic PROWL reading

I. Truth, Justice, and the Athenian Polis

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| Monday, 28 November | <u>Introduction – Philosophy and the Athenian Polis</u> Reading: Begin the Plato readings as soon as possible! | |
| Tuesday, 29 November | <u>Education, Virtue, and Politics at Athens</u> a. Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> , pp. 1-32 (336c). b. Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> , pp. 32-59. | Group 1 |
| Wednesday, 30 November | <u>Questioning Common Sense and Re-Imaging Education</u> a. Plato, <i>Republic</i> I, pp. 1-31. b. Plato, <i>Republic</i> II, pp. 32-51 (376c). | Group 2 |
| Thursday, 1 December | <u>Philosophers and the Polis</u> a. Plato, <i>Republic</i> II-III, pp. 52-88 (412b). b. Plato, <i>Republic</i> III-V, pp. 89-146 (471c). FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED | Group 3 |
| Friday, 2 December | <u>The Philosophical Vision</u> a. Plato, <i>Republic</i> V-VI, pp. 146-185. b. Plato, <i>Republic</i> VII, pp. 186-212. | Group 4 |
| Monday, 5 December | <u>Political and Personal Implications of Idealist Philosophy</u> a. Plato, <i>Republic</i> VIII-IX, pp. 213-263. b. Plato, <i>Republic</i> X, pp. 264-292. | Group 1 |
| Tuesday, 6 December | <u>Nature, the Household, the Polis, and Citizenship</u> a. *Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> II: 1-3, pp. 1-11; and <i>Politics</i> I, pp. 1-25. b. Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> II: 1-6, 9, and III, pp. 26-41, 49-55, 65-100. | Group 2 |
| Wednesday, 7 December | <u>On Good and Bad Constitutions</u> a. Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> IV, pp. 101-133. b. Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> V-VI, pp. 134-190. FIRST PAPER DRAFT DUE AT 6 PM. | Group 3 |
| Thursday, 8 December **Meet Morning & Afternoon** **in Manitou Springs** | <u>The Philosophy of Ruling / Writing Workshops</u> a. Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> VII, pp. 191-226. b. Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> VIII, pp. 227-242. c. <i>Afternoon</i> : Writing workshop, 1-3:30 PM | Group 4 |
| Friday, 9 December **No Class Meeting** | <u>Writing Day – No Class Meeting</u> FIRST PAPER DUE AT 3 PM | |

II. Philosophical Visions of Roman, Christian, and Medieval European Orders

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| Monday, 12 December | <u>Roman Republicanism and Selfless Leadership</u> a. Cicero, <i>Republic</i> I-II, pp. 3-59. b. Cicero, <i>Republic</i> III-VI, pp. 60-94. | Group 1 |
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- Tuesday, 13 December Stoicism and Law Group 2
 a. Cicero, *Laws*, pp. 97- 131.
 b. Cicero, *Laws*, pp. 131-169.
- Wednesday, 14 December Christian Visions and Words Group 3
 a. *Holy Bible, selections, pp. 1-40:
 Matthew 3:13-7:29; 10:5-42; 12:22-50; 15-16; 19:24-30;
 Mark 12:1-14:7;
 Luke 9:1-10:37;
 John 1:1-18; 18:22-19:16.
 b. *Holy Bible, selections, pp. 1-40:
 Acts 13:1-14:1; 17:10-34;
 Romans 1-16;
 1 Corinthians 13.
Suggested Reading: *Oxford Study Bible, various intros., pp. 1-15.
- Thursday, 15 December Christianity and Idealist Philosophy against Classical Politics Group 4
 a. Augustine, *Political Writings*, selections:
 Letter 138, pp. 205-212;
 Retractions, pp. 1-2;
 Books I-II, pp. 3-22;
 Book III: 30, pp. 28-29;
 Book IV: 4, 20, pp. 30-31, 32-33;
 Book V: 15-17, 19, 24-26, pp. 40-47.
 b. Augustine, *Political Writings*, Book VIII, pp. 58-70.
- Friday, 16 December Belief and the Body Politic Group 1
 a. Augustine, *Political Writings*, selections:
 Book XI: 16, pp. 79-80;
 Book XII: 1, 4, 24, 27-28, pp. 83-86, 88-91;
 Book XIV: 4-7, 13, 18, 28, pp. 95-99, 102-103, 108-109;
 Book XV, pp. 110-114;
 Book XVIII: 2, 41, 54, pp. 130-131, 135-136, 139;
 Book XIX, pp. 140-163;
 Book XXII: 1, 6, 27, 30, pp. 184-188, 194-195, 198-201;
 Status of Women, pp. 250-253.
 b. *Augustine, *City of God*, Book XXII: 22, pp. 1065-1068.
 c. *Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, pp. 117-131. Group 2
- Monday, 19 December The Medieval Prince, the Classical Good, and Common Ideals Group 1
 a. Pizan, *Book of the Body Politic*, pp. 3-57.
 b. Pizan, *Book of the Body Politic*, pp. 58-110.
- Tuesday, 20 December
 Workshop Meetings
Workshop Day – Group Appointments to Discuss Drafts
 Small Group Meetings
SECOND PAPER DRAFTS DUE IN CLASS.
- Wednesday, 21 December
 No Class Meeting
Writing Day – No Class Meeting
SECOND PAPER DUE AT NOON.
BLOCK 4 ENDS - WINTER BREAK BEGINS

TWO-PAGE SUMMARY AND REACTION STATEMENTS

Throughout the two blocks, students will write four short, informal summary-and-reaction statement. Students will be assigned to one of four groups, list above in the schedule, and expected to write papers on the readings assigned to their group. Each student's piece should be divided into two parts:

- a) Summary: stating what strikes you as the most significant or interesting point (or two points) made in the assigned text (½ – 1 page); and
- b) Reaction: explaining what that aspect of the reading leads you to think about (1 – 1 ½ pages).

These statements should be the equivalent of 1½ - 2 word-processed, double-spaced pages – so about 375-525 words long. The format is informal: your statement should list **your name**, the **date**, the assignment (**the authors, titles, and chapters/pages discussed**), and **your own title** at the top. You should divide the statement into two parts (“Summary” and “Reaction”), one summarizing the reading's most important point or points and the other giving your reaction to the reading. You need neither quote nor cite the text, though you can, if you think it important to do so. The statements should be written in clear, Standard English prose. The style may be informal.

As you write, don't try to summarize *all* the points made in the reading. Focus on one or two points that seem highly significant *to you*. This point or these points ought to have led you to think about something that seems important, significant, or meaningful. This point or these points need not be central to the reading, although in most cases I expect they will be. You may well write about some minor aside that an author makes, if that aside has led you to begin thinking. Just be sure to **explain clearly and accurately what the author says** when you claim the authors argue something. Also, explain your reaction, your interest, your thought process. When I say, “explain,” I don't mean saying that something is “interesting” or it has “made you think.” Instead, **identify what *in particular* strikes you as interesting, or what *specific problems or ideas* the reading raised for you, and then give the reader some sense of why any of these ideas seem important or significant to you.** What has led you to react in the way you have?

This assignment is meant to focus both on the reading and on your thoughts insofar as they relate to the reading. For the second half of the paper, you may explain why the authors' claims seem to you wrong-headed, or really cogent; why they excite or repel you; why they have made you think of something in a new way, or why they seem to point to a dead end. You may explain why the piece seems really bad or really good to you. This assignment lets you think aloud, as it were. However, the first part of the paper should accurately summarize what the author says.

The assignment also, I hope, will further three other aims. First, it will give you a chance to work on mastering the reading, as well as to demonstrate to me that you have done the reading. If there are parts of the reading that you don't understand, then write about the problems you have in seeing the author's points. I'll try to address those problems, either directly, by commenting on your paper, or indirectly, in class. Second, since we will be at the end of a packed term, the assignment will allow you to concentrate on one of our two closing books. Third, your comments may provide food for thought in our class discussion, as well as for you when you prepare for the oral final.

These papers will be graded minimally: check, check/minus, minus, zero. I may add no or only a few comments.

- Check: a) the paper clearly and coherently develops an idea; b) it also accurately and fully summarizes what the reading says; and c) it convincingly and clearly shows why this point or line of thought is significant to you.
- Check/minus: the paper demonstrates some effort, but it is incomplete or unbalanced.
- Minus: the paper is just thrown together, it lacks careful thought, or it is wildly inaccurate about the reading.

Checks will earn full credit (**1%**), check/minuses partial credit (**0.75%**) and minuses (**0.5%**) minimal credit. A check is the equivalent of an “A+” already for 1% of your final grade.

No late papers will be accepted. Finally, all papers will be posted to the course PROWL site and available to the entire class, for use in our discussions and preparing papers.