

Department of Political Science  
SUNY Oneonta  
Fall 2002

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Political Science 201

## CLASSICAL & MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.  
319 Fitzelle Hall

### Course Description

This course, the first in a series of chronologically organized courses in the history of Western thought and politics, will investigate the political and philosophic thought of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as of pre-modern Europe. The course will begin with a close examination of politics in the ancient Athenian *polis* and of the political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Then, after a brief examination of Roman politics and Christian theology, we will study three or four very different attempts to synthesize classical and Christian principles. The only prerequisite for the course is Political Science 121.

### Course Goals

The primary aim of the course will be to give students an overview of politics and thought in the ancient Mediterranean and in pre-modern Europe. Topics to be discussed include the emergence of participatory democracy and critical philosophy in Athens; the development of republican and imperial regimes in Rome, as well as of philosophical reflections on the significance of the rise and fall of those regimes; and the challenges involved in Christian attempts to engage political power. Along the way, the course will introduce students to the writings of several influential political thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Pizan, and More; and it will thereby offer students an opportunity to develop their own critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. Finally, by immersing students in the very different perspectives associated with classical and medieval political thought, the course will encourage students to think in critical and informed manners about the problems and achievements of modern Western political life.

### 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 semester. 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 lecture and discussion.

*Course Meetings and Discussion.* Most course meetings will consist of a mix of lecture and discussion. Some discussion will be informal. There will also be several formal discussions, which students will be assigned to lead. Students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually; to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner; and, in the discussion period they lead, to present in class a brief (350 words, maximum) summary and critique of one reading, afterwards to be handed in and counted as part of the participation grade. Performance in discussions will strongly influence the participation grade.

*Writing and Examinations.* Students should plan to write two short papers; one in-class midterm; and a take-home examination. The two papers are to be typewritten, double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with accepted norms of scholarship. Late papers will be downgraded one step per day. All written work will be submitted in digital form on a course website.

### Required Texts

*Readings in Classical Political Thought*, ed. Peter J. Steinberger (Hackett Publishing, 2000)

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

Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (Penguin Classics, 1965)

### Grading and Attendance Policies

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

1. First paper thesis statement	Tues., 10 Sept.	1%
2. First paper (3-4 pages)	Tues., 24 Sept.	15%
3. In-class midterm	Tues., 15 Oct.	20%
4. Second paper thesis statement	Tues., 5 Nov.	1%
5. Second paper draft (4-6 pages)	Tues., 12 Nov.	3%
6. Second paper final version	Tues., 19 Nov.	20%
7. Take-home final examination	Tues., 17 Dec.	25%
8. Participation		<u>15%</u>
TOTAL:		100%

Regular, timely attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences and tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. After **two** unexcused absences, your grade will drop one step (for example, from a B+ to a B). Each subsequent absence will lower your grade **two** steps. **Four** or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Tardiness will also be noted. After the third late arrival, every instance of tardiness will be treated as an absence. Course meetings are few and brief, so be there and be on time.

If you have a good reason to be absent or late, notify me in writing as soon as possible, explaining and documenting your absence. Either give me a note in class or send me an e-mail message. I will notify you if I accept your explanation, or if we need to talk more about it during my office hours.

The schedule of exams and papers 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 miss an exam or submit a paper late, contact me immediately. Either attend my office hours, or give me a note or an e-mail message explaining your circumstances.

Plan to attend class for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving early, please notify me in advance in writing (e-mail is best). If you cannot notify me in advance, do so as soon as you can afterwards.

All students are required to attend class during the final examination period.

As a courtesy to all, please turn off pagers and telephones while in class.

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

### Office Hours/Communication

I will hold regular office hours on Mondays from 5:15-6:15 p.m., Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 p.m., and Wednesdays from 1-2 p.m., in my office at 412 Fitzelle Hall. I can also make appointments at other times and on other days, if necessary. My telephone number is 436-2754. Notes can be left for me in my mailbox at the Political Science/Sociology Office, 418 Fitzelle Hall. E-mail messages can also be sent to me at:

mcennedj@oneonta.edu

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

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

*RCPT* = *Readings in Classical Political Thought*.

### ***1. Citizenship and Truth-Telling in the Polis***

Tues., 27 August	<u>Introduction</u> Class: Introduction to the course.
Tues., 3 September	<u>On the Household and the Polis (1)</u> Reading: Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> , in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 117-35. <u>Philosophy on Trial</u> Reading: Plato, <i>Apology</i> , in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 147-59. <b><i>Assignment: First paper topics distributed.</i></b>
Tues., 10 September	<u>Discussion 1 / Socratic Citizenship?</u> Reading: Plato, <i>Crito</i> , in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 159-65. <u>Paper Workshop</u> <b><i>Assignment: Thesis statement due in class.</i></b>
Tues., 17 September	FIRST FALL BREAK – Enjoy a long weekend!

### ***2. Philosophical Truth Confronts Politics***

Tues., 24 September	<u>Socrates' Attack on Sophism</u> Reading: Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I, in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 166-81. <u>Education and Justice in the Household-Republic</u> Reading: <i>Republic</i> , Book II, in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 181-96. <b><i>Assignment: First papers due.</i></b>
Tues., 1 October	<u>Discussion 2 / The Household-Republic</u> Reading: <i>Republic</i> , Books III- V471b, in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 196-241. <u>Truth and Philosophy</u> Reading: <i>Republic</i> , Books V471c-VII, in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 241-76.

Tues., 8 October	<p><u>The Art of Philosophy</u></p> <p>Reading: <i>Republic</i>, Book X, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 303-17.</p> <p><u>Discussion 3 &amp; Review</u></p>
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### ***3. The Naturalistic Truth of the Polis***

Tues., 15 October	<p>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</p> <p><u>On the Household and the Polis (2)</u></p> <p>Reading: Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>, Book I, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 377-84.</p>
Tues., 22 October	<p><u>Discussion 4 / On Citizenship and Theory</u></p> <p>Reading: <i>Politics</i>, Books II-IV, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 384-405.</p> <p><u>Poleis and Revolution</u></p> <p>Reading: <i>Politics</i>, Books V-VI, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 405-21.</p>
Tues., 29 October	<p><u>The Good State and Education</u></p> <p>Reading: <i>Politics</i>, Books VII-VIII, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 421-42.</p> <p><u>Discussion 5</u></p> <p>Reading: Review Plato, <i>Republic</i>, and Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>, in <i>RCPT</i>.</p> <p><b><i>Assignment: Second paper topics distributed.</i></b></p>

### ***4. The Theological Vision Confronts Natural Law and Politics***

Tues., 5 November	<p><u>Roman Stoicism</u></p> <p>Reading: Cicero, <i>The Republic</i>, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 446-62.</p> <p><u>Discussion 6 / Roman Politics, Neo-Platonic Philosophy, and Christian Morality</u></p> <p>Reading: Augustine, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 463-81.</p> <p><b><i>Assignment: Thesis statement due in class.</i></b></p>
Tues., 12 November	<p><u>Discussion 7 / Belief and the Body Politic</u></p> <p>Reading: Augustine, in <i>RCPT</i>, pp. 481-504.</p> <p><u>Paper Workshop</u></p> <p><b><i>Assignment: Drafts of second paper due in class.</i></b></p>

Tues., 19 November	<u>Aristotle, Natural Law, and Christian Kings</u> Reading: Aquinas, in <i>RCPT</i> , pp. 508-46. <u>Discussion 8</u> <b>Assignment: <i>Second paper due.</i></b>
Tues., 26 November	<u>The Godly Rule, the Prince and the Interdependent Community</u> Reading: Pizan, <i>Book of the Body Politic</i> , pp. 3-110. <u>Discussion 9</u>

THANKSGIVING – Enjoy the holiday!

Tues., 3 December	<u>The Power of the Tudors / The Nonsense of Philosophy and Politics</u> Reading: Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> , Introductory Letters, Books One & Two, pp. 3-85. <u>Discussion 10 / Summary and Review</u> <b>Assignment: <i>Take-home final examination distributed</i></b>
Tues., 10 December	NO CLASS – FOLLOW THURSDAY SCHEDULE
Tues., 17 December	FINAL EXAMINATION, 6 p.m. <b>Assignment: <i>Take-home final examination due in class.</i></b>