

Department of Political Science  
Vassar College  
Spring 1993

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## Political Science 284

### Thought and Politics in Ancient Greece

112 Rockefeller Hall  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11:15 am  
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:15-4:15 pm and by appointment

This course will investigate the ancient Greek polis, the moral and political thought associated with the polis, and the place of ancient Greek political experience in modern political theory. We will begin by examining some of the origins of and variations on the polis, and then trace the rise of democratic and imperial Athens. Next we will examine in depth the moral and political thought of the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Finally, we will question the significance of the ancient Greek political experience, using differing contemporary appropriations of Greek political thought as springboards. Course meetings will consist of a mix of lecture and discussion.

There are no prerequisites for this course, although one course in political theory, philosophy, or classics would be advisable. Students who have not already read Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* may find it useful to read both on their own before reading *Gorgias*. There are essentially three requirements for this course. First, students should plan to devote a good deal of time to reading carefully. Second, students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually and, having read the assigned texts before class, to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner. Attendance will be noted and participation graded. Third, students should plan to write three short papers and a midterm examination. 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. There will be no final examination.

The following books, available at the College Store, contain most of the required readings. Discussion will be easier with the specific translations and editions listed below, but if you already own a different translation or edition, buying another is not necessary. Students particularly interested in Plato or classical Greek thought may wish to purchase *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, in place of the Plato editions listed here. *The Collected Dialogues* contains all of the writings attributed to Plato, including *The Letters*.

Hesiod, *Hesiod and Theognis*, tr. Dorothea Wender (Penguin Classics, 1976)  
Antony Andrewes, *The Greeks* (Norton, 1978)  
Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, tr. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics, 1984)  
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, tr. Rex Warner, rev. ed. (Penguin Classics, 1972)  
Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. Donald J. Zeyl (Hackett, 1986)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The Republic*, tr. H. D. Lee, rev. ed. (Penguin Classics, 1955)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. Terrence Irwin (Hackett, 1985)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The Politics of Aristotle*, tr. Ernest Barker (Oxford, 1946)  
Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1978)  
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1970)

The first two books on the list, Hesiod and Andrewes, are only recommended for purchase; copies have been placed on reserve in the Library, so it may be possible to do without buying the texts. Multiple copies of additional required readings, marked by asterisks on the following schedule, can also be found on reserve in the Library.

# SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

\* Indicates readings on reserve at the Library

## 1. WEEKS 1-4: FROM MYTHOS TO LOGOS TO CHAOS?

- Thurs., 21 Jan.                    Introduction: Hellenism and Modernity  
No reading.
- Tues., 26 Jan.                    Origins, Myths, and Religions  
\*Hesiod, *Theogeny*, in *Hesiod and Theognis*, tr. Wender, pp. 23-57.  
\*Antony Andrewes, *The Greeks*, pp. 30-75, 230-246.
- Thurs., 28 Jan.                    Laws and Orders (1)  
\*Plutarch, "Lycurgus," in *Plutarch's Lives*, pp. 32-48.  
\*Andrewes, pp. 76-146.
- Tues., 2 Feb.                    Laws and Orders (2)  
Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* in *Oresteia*, tr. Fagles, pp. 103-226.  
Recommended: \*H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks*, pp. 65-135.
- Thurs., 4 Feb.                    Laws and Orders (3)  
Aeschylus, *The Eumenides* in *Oresteia*, pp. 231-272.  
\*Andrewes, pp. 167-229.
- Tues., 9 Feb.                    Wars and Democracy  
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*  
Book I, 1-146, pp. 35-123;  
Book II, 1-17, pp. 124-136; and 34-66, pp. 143-168.  
FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED
- Thurs., 11 Feb.                    Empire, Democracy, and Crisis  
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*  
Book III, 36-51, pp. 212-223; and 69-85, pp. 236-244;  
Book IV, 15-23, pp. 273-278; and 78-88, pp. 311-318;  
Book V, 84-116, pp. 400-408;  
Book VI, 8-32, pp. 414-429; 60-61, pp. 447-449; and 72-93, pp. 455-470;  
Book VII, 82-87, pp. 533-537;  
Book VIII, 45-98, pp. 562-599.  
FIRST PAPER DUE 5 PM, MONDAY, 15 FEB.

## 2. WEEKS 5-7: SOPHISM, PLATONISM, AND THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY

- Tues., 16 Feb.                    Truths of the Polis  
\*Antiphon, "On Truth" (selections to be distributed in class)  
Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 1-50.
- Thurs., 18 Feb.                    Socrates' Attacks on Sophism  
Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 51-113.  
Plato, *The Republic*, Part 1, pp. 61-114.
- Tues., 23 Feb.                    Plato and the Polis  
Plato, *The Republic*, Parts 2-6, pp. 115-259.
- Thurs., 25 Feb.                    Platonic Philosophy and Politics  
Plato, *The Republic*, Parts 7-9, pp. 260-420.

Tues., 2 Mar. Art, Politics, and the Soul  
 Plato, *The Republic*, Parts 10-11, pp. 421-455.  
 \*Plato, "The Seventh Letter."

Thurs., 4 Mar. Midterm Examination  
 No reading.

\*\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\*

### 3. WEEKS 8-10: ETHICS AND POLITICS OF THE PRACTICAL MAN

Tues., 23 Mar. Virtue and the Doctrine of the Mean  
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 1-115.

Thurs., 25 Mar. Justice, Knowledge, and Morality  
 Aristotle, *Ethics*, pp. 116-207.

Tues., 30 Mar. Friendship and the Good Life  
 Aristotle, *Ethics*, pp. 207-298.

Thurs., 1 Apr. The Household and the Polis  
 Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, tr. Ernest Barker, pp. 1-91.

Tues., 6 Apr. Citizenship, Poleis, and Revolution  
 Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 92-254.  
 SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

Thurs., 8 Apr. The Good State and Education  
 Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 255-352.  
 SECOND PAPER DUE 5 PM, MONDAY, 12 APRIL

### 4. WEEKS 11-14: POLITICAL THEORY AND THE NEW ANCIENTS

Tues., 13 Apr. The Moderns and the Ancients (1)  
 Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, pp. 1-49.

Thurs., 15 Apr. Strauss' Defense of Political Philosophy  
 Strauss, pp. 50-138.

Tues., 20 Apr. The Politics of Ancient Philosophy  
 Strauss, pp. 139-241.

Thurs., 22 Apr. The Moderns and the Ancients (2)  
 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 1-135.

Tues., 27 Apr. The Problems of Politics and Philosophy  
 Arendt, pp. 136-247.

Thurs., 29 Apr. Politics Ancient and Modern?  
 Arendt, pp. 248-325.  
 THIRD PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

Tues., 4 May Political Theory and Ancient Greece  
 No reading.  
 THIRD AND FINAL PAPER DUE 5 PM, FRIDAY, 7 MAY