Introduction to Political Thought: POL-103
Fall 2019
Johns Hall, 111: POL Seminar Room

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Office: Johns Hall 110, across from the Riley Center
Office hours: MWF 12:30-1:20

Course Description

This course addresses the fundamental political questions: What is the best regime? Who should rule? What is justice? What is the best way of life, or what constitutes the human good? We will examine different perspectives on these questions by reading five of the greatest works of political philosophy, drawn from texts that span the better part of recorded history.

In reading these wide-ranging works, we will find opinions that are intuitively agreeable to us as well as positions that seem strange, difficult, or repugnant. We will endeavor to entertain truly different options, to look curiously at our own opinions in the light of our reading, and to elaborate the implications of the positions we take. Every author we study should be taken with the utmost seriousness. Understanding their positions, as well as the disagreements among them, will both give us insight into the enduring philosophical problems that underlie our ordinary political debates and help us develop mature answers of our own to the fundamental questions of political philosophy.

Please purchase all of the following texts this week:
(excepting the Aquinas, which I will provide)


(Thomas Aquinas, excerpts from the *Summa Theologica* [1266-1273] and from *On Kingship*.)


Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [1835 and 1840], trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago).
Syllabus

August 28: Introduction

**INTRODUCTORY ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS—2 paragraphs**
This is an initial reflection on the fundamental questions of political philosophy: please see the last page of this handout for instructions.


September 11: Plato, *The Republic*, Book V.
September 13: Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI.

September 16: Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII.
September 18: Plato, *The Republic*, Book VIII.
September 20: Plato, *The Republic*, Book IX.

September 23: Plato, *The Republic*, Book X (613a-621d, or pages 296-303)

**PLATO PAPER DUE BY EMAIL 5:00 PM—800-1,200 words**

September 25: **PLATO TEST**
September 27: Aquinas biography & Aquinas, *On Kingship*, Chapters 1-7
(Aquinas packet is on Moodle)

September 30: Aquinas, *On Kingship*, Chapters 8-16 and selection from *Summa Theologica*
October 2: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica* (see packet for specifics)
October 4: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*

October 7: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*
October 9: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*
October 11: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*

**Extra Credit option: submit revised reflection on the fundamental questions of political philosophy; submit via email.**

**FALL BREAK**

October 16: Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*

**OPTIONAL PAPER ON AQUINAS DUE BY EMAIL 5:00 PM—800-1,200 words.**

Storey—PSC103-2
October 18: Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in Aquinas Packet

AQUINAS TEST

October 21: Machiavelli biography
Machiavelli, The Prince, Dedicatory Letter, chapters I-III

October 23: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters IV-VI
Discourses I.9-10, 58 & II.2.

October 25: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters VII-XI
Discourses I.11-12, 18 (last two paragraphs only), 26-27.

October 28: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters XII-XIV
1 Samuel 17-18:9 (Moodle).

*October 29:

Required Lecture (CLP pending)
“This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine:
A Shakespearean Education for Liberty”
Dr. Panayiotis Kanelos
President, St. John’s College, Annapolis
Johns 101
5 PM

October 30: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters XV-XIX

November 1: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters XX-XXVI
Discourses III.9.
OPTIONAL PAPER ON MACHIAVELLI DUE BY EMAIL 5:00 PM—800-1,200 words

*Students who attend the Political Thought Club this afternoon have a 3-hour extension.
November 4: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1-2, (pp.5-14)  
Locke Biography (moodle)  
MACHIAVELLI/LOCKE TEST  
*November 14: OPTIONAL PAPER DUE ON LOCKE, BY EMAIL 5:00 PM—800-1,200 words.*  
November 15: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction  
(pp. 3-18).  
Tocqueville biography  
(pp. 27-53).  
November 20: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume I, Part I, Chapter 4 and part of  
Chapter 5; Volume I, Part II, Chapter 6  
(pp. 53-65 and pp. 220-235).  
November 22: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume I, Part II, Chapter 7 and Volume II,  
Part I, Chapters 1-3.  
(pp. 235-249 and pp. 403-415).  
November 25: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II, Part I, Chapters 5-7 and Volume II  
Part II, Chapters 8-9.  
(pp. 417-426, and pp. 500-506).  
THANKSGIVING BREAK  
December 2: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II, Part I, Chapters 8-10 and  
Volume II, Part II, Chapters 1-5.  
(pp. 426-439 and pp. 479-92).  
*Tuesday, December 3:*  
QUESTION OUTLINE OF FINAL PAPER DUE—submit on moodle  
Your final paper will revisit your initial reflection on the fundamental questions of  
political philosophy and engage the arguments of at least two authors we studied.


**TOCQUEVILLE TEST**

December 9: Last Class

**FRIDAY, December 13th:** FINAL DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE—1,200-1,800 words

**Assignments**

There are five main components to the assignments for this class:

1. **Reading.** Furman policy states that students should expect 2-3 hours of prep time per class, apart from the time required to write papers. You will likely need the full complement of that time to read these challenging selections well. Often one needs to read these texts twice to understand their meaning and significance. Taking the time to read carefully, make notes on what you’ve read, and think about the questions raised, is essential to learning in this course.

2. **Participation:** This is a seminar, and as such depends upon the preparation and participation of the students involved. Come to class every day prepared with at least one question about the reading. Questions about what you have not understood are very valuable contributions.

3. **Weekly assignments:** On one day of each class week, you will have a short writing assignment to help you understand the fundamental questions of the course and the arguments of the authors we study.
   
   a. For the first week, all students must write the *introductory assignment on the fundamental questions of political philosophy*. Please see attached sheet for specific guidelines.
   
   b. For all other weeks, unless instructed otherwise, write a *question assignment*. This consists of at least one paragraph detailing something you don’t yet understand about the day’s assigned reading. The class will be divided into three groups corresponding to the three days of the week on which our class meets.
Each group should post questions for the day’s reading by 9:00 am on the day of their assignment. You should be prepared to write your question on the board, and also to speak about it. All weekly assignments will be graded on the scale of 0-5.

c. Please note that, taken together, the weekly assignments constitute a significant portion of your grade for this class.

4. Tests: There will be a cumulative, in-class test toward the end of our sessions on Plato, on Aquinas, on Machiavelli/Locke, and on Tocqueville. You may drop the lowest test grade of the semester.

5. Papers: you are required to turn in three papers on the primary texts over the course of the semester. The paper on Plato is mandatory. You may choose whether to write a paper on Aquinas, Machiavelli or Locke (or any combination of the three). The final paper, which will revisit your initial reflection on the fundamental questions of political philosophy and engage with at least two authors we’ve read in the course, is mandatory. Please see the paper guidelines and the citation guidelines for more detailed information about this assignment.

**Breakdown of Final Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plato Paper</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Paper</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tests (3 tests—out of 4—at 9% each)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question assignments</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Policies

Attendance and Classroom Decorum:

After three absences of any kind, every further absence results in the loss of 5% of your final grade. You are required to be in attendance for the entire class hour, so as not to disrupt the discussion. Please plan to arrive on time and be prepared to stay without break through the session. **If you do not bring your book to class, you cannot participate fully; failure to bring your book therefore will be marked as half an absence.** Drinks are permitted in the classroom, but not food.

Electronics:

The use of electronic devices in the classroom is not permitted, as it inhibits discussion and has a demonstrably negative impact on the performance of the student using the device. Classes are not to be recorded without permission. If you have a SOAR accommodation to record class, please let me know.

Papers:

Please see the separate guidelines for paper instructions. You should note that (per the guidelines) more than three sloppy mistakes—misspellings, mistakes in conjugation, missing words or missing marks of punctuation—**will result in a downgrade of 5% for the paper.**

Academic Integrity: If you consult any source beyond the assigned reading for an assignment, you must cite that source. This includes electronic resources. Quotations or paraphrases from any source that are not accompanied by proper citations constitute plagiarism and will be treated as academic integrity violations. The instructor may use “turn-it-in” or other aids to determine violations. **The penalty for such a violation may be failure of the course.**

Please note that “secondary sources” such as sparknotes, novelguide, gradesaver, etc. are not permitted for this class. Evidence of use of this type of secondary source in preparing a paper will result in failure of the paper.
Two of the most fundamental questions of political philosophy were formulated by Socrates as such:

What is the best way of life? What is the best regime?

Because the way in which we talk about such questions has changed, you may find that it is easier to begin to understand these questions if they are rephrased as such:

To what purpose or purposes should human life be devoted?
What role should our political order play in promoting this purpose/these purposes?

For this assignment, write two paragraphs that state and explain what you currently think is the answer to each question. Each paragraph should have a clearly stated claim that directly answers the question, followed by at least two reasons to support your opinion.