Justice, the Best Regime, and the Good Life

This course provides an introduction to the comprehensive political questions: justice (Who deserves what?), the best regime (Who should rule?) and the good human life—the kind of life a good regime should encourage, or at least not obstruct. We will examine these questions by reading some of the best texts ever written about them: Plato’s Republic, selections from Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologica and his On Kingship, Machiavelli’s Prince, John Locke’s Second Treatise of Government, and Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America. These texts present powerful but competing views of the questions of justice, the best regime, and the good life, in the light of which we will attempt to reassess our own views. Every text we study is of the highest quality, and we will try to give them the careful reading they merit. In exploring them, this course should provide the student with the beginnings of an understanding of the enduring philosophical problems toward which our everyday political disagreements point. It should also provide you with an opportunity to reflect on the question of how to live as an individual and a member of a political community.

NOTA BENE: This is an “unplugged course.” The use of all electronic devices—cell phones, laptops, etc.—is prohibited in the classroom at all times.

BOOKS FOR IMMEDIATE PURCHASE

Plato, Republic, tr. Allan Bloom (Basic Books)

St. Thomas Aquinas, Political Writings, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge)

Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, tr. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago)

John Locke, Political Writings, Ed. David Wootton (Hackett)

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (2 Volumes), ed. Eduardo Nolla, tr. James T. Schliefer (Liberty Fund)

DAILY SCHEDULE

January 8-February 5: Plato’s Republic and Classical Political Philosophy

January 8: Introduction; Plato, Republic, Book I (327a-336a).
January 11: Plato, Republic, Books I and II (through 368b only).

January 15: No Class (Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday)

January 18: Republic, Books II-III.
January 22: Republic, Book IV. Test on Plato’s Republic, I-IV.
January 25: Republic, Book V.
January 29: Republic, Book VII. (Reading book VI is recommended, but not required).
February 1: Republic, Book VIII.
February 5: Republic, Book IX.

February 6: Paper I due by email to benjamin.storey@furman.edu by 12:00 noon.

February 8-February 26: Thomas Aquinas and Medieval Political Philosophy

Note: For day-by-day Aquinas readings, refer to the Aquinas Packet on Moodle.

February 8: Aquinas, Class 1.
February 12: Aquinas, Class 2.
February 15: Aquinas, Class 3.
February 19: Aquinas, Class 4.
February 22: Aquinas, Class 5.
February 26: Aquinas, Class 6. Paper II due by email to benjamin.storey@furman.edu by 4:30 pm.

Interlude: Natural Law in Modern America

March 1: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (Moodle).

March 12-March 22: Machiavelli’s Prince and Modern Political Philosophy

March 15: The Prince Chapters VII-X; Discourses on Livy I, 18 (last two paragraphs only), 26-27, and 58.
March 19: Prince Chapters XI-XVIII, Discourses on Livy I.11-12 and II.2; 1 Samuel 17:12 to 18:9 (Moodle).
March 22: The Prince Chapters XIX-XXVI; Discourses on Livy III 9. Paper III (Option 1) due by email to benjamin.storey@furman.edu by 4:30 PM.

March 26-April 5: John Locke’s Liberal Political Philosophy

March 26: Second Treatise of Government, chapters I-IV.
March 29: Second Treatise of Government, chapter V-VI.

April 2: No Class (Easter Holiday)

April 5: Second Treatise, chapters VII-IX. Paper III (Option 2) due by email to benjamin.storey@furman.edu by 4:30 pm.

April 9-April 24: Alexis de Tocqueville’s Political Philosophy and American Democracy

April 9: Tocqueville, Democracy in America, I.1, Introduction, chapter 2 (p. 3-32, 45-73).
April 12: Tocqueville, Democracy in America, I.1.3, 5 beginning; I.2.7 (selections); I.2.10 (beginning) (p. 74-90, 98-114, 402-407, 410-423, 515-521).
April 16: Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II.1.1-3, 5, 7-8, 10 (p. 697-736, 742-753, 757-762, 775-787).
April 23: Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II.3.8, 12, II.4.6-8 (p. 1031-1041, 1062-1067, 1245-1285). Optional Paper B2 due by email to benjamin.storey@furman.edu by 4:30 pm.

Monday, April 30, 3:30-6:00 pm: Final Exam.

ASSIGNMENTS, PARTICIPATION, AND GRADING

Breakdown of Course Grades:

Attendance and Participation: 10%
Reading Quizzes: 15%
Plato’s Republic Test: 10%
Paper I: 15%
Paper II: 15%
Paper III (Option 1 or 2): 15%
Final Exam: 20%
Total: 100%

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance: 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. Drinks are permitted in the classroom, but not food.

Participation: Students should come to class ready to participate. You should be prepared to ask at least one question about the day’s reading. You should also be prepared to be called on at any time to answer questions from the instructor.

Reading Quizzes: 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 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. To make sure that you have read for each class, there will be an occasional pop quiz.

Papers: you are required to turn in 3 papers over the course of the semester. Each must fit on the two sides of a single page. These papers will follow a question of your own choosing. Please see the paper guidelines and the citation guidelines for more detailed information about this assignment.
Final Exam: The final exam will consist of two parts: (1) an essay on the thought of Alexis de Tocqueville. (2) Short answer or identification questions, which may be drawn from any of the materials we have read this term.

Grade Scale:

97% - 100% = A+
94% - 96% = A
90% - 93% = A-
87% - 89% = B+
84% - 86% = B
80% - 83% = B-

77% - 79% = C+
74% - 76% = C
70% - 73% = C-
67% - 69% = D+
63% - 66% = D

60%-63% = D- Below 60% = F
**Writing Guidelines**

A. Writing Guidelines
B. Writing Tips, Skills and Expectations
C. Formatting Guidelines
D. Citation Guidelines
   1) Bibliography
   2) In-text Citation
E. Grading Guidelines

**A: Writing Guidelines**

Your papers should be organized around a question that you pose to the text. A good question:

- is challenging to answer.
  - In other words, the answer should not be immediately obvious. You should choose a question that is interesting or perplexing to you.
- concerns a theme that is of central significance to the book.
- is focused on the book or books in question.
  - Asking what a given author would say about our regime, for example, is important and interesting, but in the paper you should concentrate on attaining a better grasp of the author’s argument. Such speculations may form a part of your paper, but should not be central to your question.

Your first paragraph should pose the question in a precise manner. It should also tell the reader why the question is important to understanding the book or author as a whole, if this is not self-evident.

The body of your paper should examine the author’s answer or answers to your question, elucidating the complexities of his position. You should support your argument concerning the author’s answer to your question with quotations and interpretations of those quotations.

Your paper should unfold as an argument to prove its point. Each paragraph should form an essential step in your overall argument, and each sentence should contribute to the thesis of the paragraph.

Your paper should conclude with your best account of the author’s most comprehensive answer to the question.

You may disagree with the author’s analysis, but in doing so, you must take care to represent accurately your author’s position, make a reasoned objection, and consider how your author might respond to your objection.
B: Writing Tips, Skills, and Expectations

1. **Tips** for Writing Good Papers:
   a. **Devote your full attention to your work.**
   b. Keep a record of possible questions and interesting themes as you read.
   c. Start a draft one week prior to the due date.

2. **Skills** you will be expected to develop through your writing in this class:
   a. Formulating questions
   b. Using quotations to develop your argument
   c. Writing an effective introduction
   d. Constructing an argument that unfolds with logical precision
   e. Proofreading

3. **Expectations:**

   Essays should demonstrate that you:
   
   a. have independently engaged with our texts;
   b. have understood those texts and appreciated their significance;
   c. have asked a genuine question and made a vigorous effort to answer it;
   d. have organized your essay by
      a. introducing your question in a compelling manner,
      b. writing a logical sequence of paragraphs that advance your argument, and
      c. formulating a conclusion that responds to your question;
   e. have developed your argument with quotations from your texts;
   f. have carefully edited and proofread your paper.

C: Formatting Guidelines

The overall question of your papers should be **underlined** and the thesis of every paragraph should be **italicized**. This requirement is intended to help you organize your writing and discipline your argument.

Papers should be 2 pages, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins ("normal" setting on MS Word). Line spacing is up to you.
D: Citation Guidelines

Correct citation format and bibliographic information is a graded element of your work.

1) Bibliography:

Each paper should include a bibliography, even if you only use the primary text. In this class, we will use the Chicago (or Turabian) form for bibliographic citation.

For single-author books, the format is as follows:

Last name, First name. Title. Ed. (or Trans.) First name Last Name. Place of publication: Press, Date.

For example:


For clarification, consult the Chicago Manual of Style Quick Citation Guide, to which Google can lead you.

Do not use a website or app to generate your bibliography. The results are almost always incorrect.

It is not required to use outside resources in your papers for this class. If you choose to do so, you must include a citation of those resources in your bibliography. Formatting for various kinds of material—books, articles, webpages, etc.—can be found by consulting the Chicago Manual of Style Quick Citation Guide, to which, again, Google can lead you.

2) In-text citations:

Every quotation in your paper should be cited in the text. You may also use in-text citation when you want to indicate more generally the section of the book from which you draw your argument. In-text citations should be placed in parentheses. These should appear at the end of a sentence, after any quotation marks, but before the period.

Most of the texts we will use in this class can be cited by page number. For Plato’s Republic, however, please use Stephanus margin numbers (i.e., 275B). For Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologica, please use the Part, Book, Question, and Article numbers (i.e., II.II.2.1).

If you cite more than one author in a paper, provide the author’s name in the in-text citation. If you cite two sources from the same author, provide the author and an abbreviated title of the work.

Example: (Machiavelli, Discourses, 84).
E: Academic Integrity

Quotations or paraphrases from any source which are not accompanied by proper citations constitute plagiarism and will be treated as academic integrity violations. This includes electronic resources. The penalty for such violations may include failure of the paper or of the course.

Secondary “sources” such as sparknotes, novelguide, gradesaver, etc. are not permitted for this class. Evidence of use of this type of secondary source will result in failure of the paper. Outright plagiarism may result in failure of the course.

F: Grading Guidelines

A: An outstanding essay, organized around a clearly-posed question on an important theme. Demonstrates intensive engagement with the arguments of the texts in question. Proceeds through a disciplined argument. Makes detailed reference to the texts, including appropriate quotations, and offers accurate interpretations of those quotations. Usually the result of delving into the complexities of the argument, stepping back to discern the overall coherence of the author or authors’ point, and then taking the time to compose an interesting and compelling essay.

B: A good essay that asks an important question and expounds the answer through a disciplined argument. An essay that is competent rather than distinguished. Clear organization, clean writing, and evidence of substantial specific knowledge of the texts, including appropriate quotations.

C: Demonstrates only marginal understanding of the author or authors’ arguments. Usually deficient in textual specificity, organization, or quality of writing. May show some competence, but not sufficient to compensate for the paper’s defects.

D: Demonstrates little understanding of the author or authors’ arguments. Poorly organized, lacking in textual specificity, lacking clarity in writing, or all of the above.

F: No evidence of serious work.

**More than three misspellings, mistakes in conjugation, missing words or missing marks of punctuation will result in a downgrade of 5%.**

Late papers will be downgraded by 5% every 24 hours.