

POSC 160

Political Philosophy

Spring 2020

Class Hours: TTH: 1:15-3:00

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Zoom Office Hours, Tuesday and Thursday, 3:10-5:10 Central Time and by appointment

Course Description

This is the first version online of this course. Our class will meet on ZOOM!

The objective of the course is to explore and discuss ancient and modern responses to questions such as: What are the nature, the causes, and the effects of good government? How far are people able to influence the regimes that govern them? Can political philosophy help us identify the best form of government? What are the qualities of a good citizen? Who should rule? What are the qualities of a good ruler? How should political change occur: by reform or by revolution? Is democracy the best form of government? What is liberty? Why is liberty politically and morally relevant? What is the relationship between history and politics?

In answering these questions we will understand the differences between ancient and modern political philosophy. We will also understand how modern political philosophers differed from each other in the way they theorized about politics and about its relationship with moral, socio-economic and cultural aspects.

Course objectives

- To understand what political philosophy is: what are its main concerns and its specific method;
- To grasp the foundations of Western political philosophy, as set by Greek political philosophy, particularly by Plato and Aristotle;
- To learn about the specific concerns and ideas of ancient and, respectively, of modern political philosophy;
- To understand the differences (and the similarities) between ancient and modern political philosophy;
- To know some of the differences between modern approaches to politics;
- To become better readers, thinkers, speakers, and writers

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the specific nature of political philosophy, particularly, of ancient and modern political philosophy by carefully and closely reading the following books:
Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, ISBN: 9780393314677

Aristotle, *Politics*, translated and with an introduction, notes, and glossary by Carnes Lord, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984, ISBN: 9780226026695
Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hackett Publishing House, 1994, ISBN: 0-87220-177-5
Im. Kant, *Political Writings*, translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 2000, ISBN: 9780521398374

HOWEVER, the ways in which we will achieve our course objectives will be different, at least to some extent, from what we have experienced up to this point in time at Carleton, in our classroom engagements.

The course will combine synchronous and asynchronous teaching/learning methods.

First, everyone should have an Internet connection and a laptop (or access to one).

Second, PLEASE, understand that teaching/learning online involves a rethinking of what the public means. Hence, find a quiet place to connect with us during class. Be decently dressed (not a pajamas or something so relaxed that you might make us blush), be respectful of everyone, **do not eat during our class**. Pay attention, listen to others and be as polite and considerate of others as you would be in a classroom at Carleton. **Do not quit class to go to bathroom**. We will take a five minute break in the middle of the class.

Course Requirements:

A. Three short essays (each, three double-spaced pages) on the following topics (15% each):

1) *Is being just an absolute and intrinsic good or not? Would being just, in the sense defined by Plato in the Republic, help us to better cope with situations of crisis as we are experiencing today with the Coronavirus pandemic?*

The essay is due on April 27, by 4 PM Central Time (upload the paper on Moodle)

2) *In Politics, Aristotle argues that the best achievable form of government is one that allows for most individuals to live a happy life, which is mainly a life of moderation. Do you agree with Aristotle? In constructing your argument please keep in the back of your mind the pandemic the world is currently facing. Would Aristotle's recommendation for a moderate life help us today to better exist as a society and not allow the social ties to be destroyed by the selfish struggle for survival?*

The essay is due on May 13, by 4 PM Central Time (upload the paper on Moodle)

3) *Kant shares some common assumptions with Hobbes regarding human nature (aka, human psychology). However, he reaches different conclusions than Hobbes about domestic and international political arrangements. What*

accounts for this difference? As a part of your explanation provide two reasons for which you agree with one thinker more than with the other.

The essay is due on May 27 by 4 PM Central Time (upload the essay on Moodle)

- 4) **Active and informed class participation:** This includes: (i) attending classes and (ii) doing the readings for the day (10%).
- 5) **Final Take Home Exam (45%) will be posted on Moodle on Saturday, June 6 at 10 AM (Central Time) and will be due on Monday, June 8 by 5 PM Central Time (upload your exam on Moodle). Please do not forget to write your name inside your exam document and number your pages!**

What Is Expected from the Students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

April 7: Whole class meeting

Introduction: What is Political Philosophy? Why Study Political Philosophy? How to Study Political Philosophy?

A lesson from Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*

Greek politics and philosophy

Plato and Socrates

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book I

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by April 10 at NOON CST.**

Ambrogio Lorenzetti: The Allegory of Good and Bad Government

What does good government require? What virtues do rulers need to have in order for government to be good?

April 9: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Justice in the soul and the city

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Books II and III

April 14: Whole Class Meeting

Politics and Education

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Books IV and V

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by April 17 at NOON CST.**

How does Plato define justice? Is justice the only virtue that matters in Plato's view? Do you agree with Plato?

April 16: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Political virtues and political life in the just city: property, family, and the education of the guardians

The argument for the rule of the philosopher

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Books VI and VII

April 21: Whole Class Meeting

Political Regimes

Reading: Plato, Republic, Books VIII and IX

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by April 24 at NOON CST.**

Do you agree with Plato's criticism of democracy?

April 23: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Conclusions to Plato: What would Plato's recommendation be for living a just life in the time of a pandemic as we are experiencing today?

Reading: Plato, Republic, Book X

April 28: Whole class meeting

Aristotle: Introduction: The place and role of political partnership in the human life

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by May 1st at NOON CST.**

Do you agree with Aristotle's definition of political partnership?

May 5: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Citizenship

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 1-13, 18, Book 4, Chapters 1-4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, Book 5, chapters 1-3, 5-8, Book 7, chapters 1-3, 7, 13-15

May 7: Whole class meeting

Political Regimes

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 4, Chapters 8, 9, 11, Book 5, chapters 1-3, 5-8, Book 7, chapters 1-3, 7, 13-15

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by May 11 at NOON CST.**

Do you agree with Aristotle's argument for the best political regime?

May 12: Whole class meeting

Introduction to Hobbes: Rethinking the foundations of politics

Speech, reason, and power

Reading: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction, Part One, Chapters i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, viii, x, and xi

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by May 15 at NOON CST.**

What differences do you see between Plato's and Aristotle's conception of reason, on the one hand, and Hobbes' conception of reason, on the other hand? Do you agree with one side more than the other?

May 14: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

The natural condition of man: natural law and natural rights

Reading: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part One, Chapters xiii, xiv, xv, and xvi

The commonwealth

Reading: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part Two, Chapters xvii, xviii, xix, xxi

May 19: Whole class meeting

Introduction to Kant: Enlightenment and politics

Reading: Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* in *Political Writings*

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by May 22 at NOON CST.**

Do you agree with Kant's definition of the Enlightenment and with his conception of the public use of reason?

May 21: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Kant on Human nature, history, and reason

Reading: Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, in *Political Writings*

May 26: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Morality and politics

Reading: Kant, *On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice*, in *Political Writings*, pages 61-79

May 28: Whole class meeting

Republican governments and international order

Reading: Kant, *On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice,* in *Political Writings*, pages 79-93

Moodle Discussion Forum: I want you to post in this discussion forum a one paragraph answer to my question below. In your answer you are also expected to react to the post of another student from the class. **The answers are due by June 1st at NOON CST.**

Do you agree with Kant's definition of a cosmopolitan order?

June 3: Separate meetings of two groups (each meeting 50 minutes)

Final Review