

POSC 160

Political Philosophy

Fall 2020

Class Hours: MW: 1:00-2:10 and F: 1:50-2:50

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Zoom Office Hours, Monday and Wednesday, 2:15-5:00 Central Time and by appointment

Course Description

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

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1980, ISBN: 9780915144945

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**. The classes are short, no longer than an hour and ten minutes.

Course Requirements:

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

1) *We are witnessing in the US today intense social turmoil due to racism and social injustice. Moreover, both in the US and in other parts of the world, there are individuals who protest against the demand to respect public protocols (such as wearing a mask) which would protect us all during the current COVID 19 pandemic, thus serving larger social goals and a common good. Given his conception about the relationship between the city and the soul, his view of justice, and his criticism of democracy, how do you think would Plato judge the current situation and what recommendations do you think he would make? The essay is due on October 6, by 4 PM Central Time (email the paper to mlupp@carleton.edu in WORD FORMAT)*

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, as well as a life where individuals have the leisure to perfect their ability to deliberate, judge, and converse with each other about the meaning. Do you agree with Aristotle? Did modern societies live up to Aristotle's recommendation?*

The essay is due on October 22, by 4 PM Central Time (email the paper to mlupp@carleton.edu in WORD FORMAT)

- 3) *Both Hobbes and Kant assign an important role to egoism and violence in human life. Do you agree with them? Despite this agreement, Hobbes and Kant reach different conclusions about politics (both internally and internationally). What do you think accounts for the difference?*
The essay is due on November 10 by 4 PM Central Time (email the paper to mlupp@carleton.edu in WORD FORMAT)
- 4) **Group Presentations (10%)**
- 5) **Active and informed class participation:** This includes: (i) attending classes and (ii) doing the readings for the day (5%).
- 6) **Final Take Home Exam (35%) will be posted on Moodle on Saturday, November 21 at 10 AM (Central Time) and will be due on Monday, November 23 by 5 PM Central Time (email the exam to mlupp@carleton.edu in WORD FORMAT)**
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:

September 14:

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

September 16:

Greek Politics and Philosophy: Plato and Socrates

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book I

September 18:

Education, Culture, and Justice

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book II

September 21:

Justice in the soul and the city

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

September 23:

Plato's Revolution

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book V

September 25:

Philosophy, Politics, and Rhetoric:

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Books VI

September 28:

The Argument for the rule of the philosopher

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book VII

September 30:

Political Regimes

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII

October 1:

The tyrant and the just man

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book IX

Moodle Discussion Forum 1: 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 on October 1 at NOON CST.**

What can we take for today's world from Plato's conception of politics, particularly, from his conception of justice, his criticism of democracy, and his view about the connection between the city and the soul?

October 5:

Conclusions: What can we take for today's world from Plato's conception of politics, particularly, from his conception of justice, his criticism of democracy, and his view about the connection between the city and the soul? (Group Presentation 1)

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book X

October 7:

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

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1

October 9:

Citizenship and Virtue

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 1-6, 13, and 18 and Book 7, Chapters 13-15.

October 12:

Political Regimes: Criteria and classification

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 7-12, 15 and 17, Book 4, Chapters 2, 4, 6

October 14:

The argument for the best political regime

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 4, Chapters 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, Book 7, Chapters 1-3

October 16:

Civil Strife and Stability

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 5

Moodle Discussion Forum 2: 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 on October 16 at NOON CST.**

What can we take for today's world from Aristotle's conception of politics, particularly, his argument for the importance of virtue in politics and his recommendations about how different political regimes can avoid civil strife?

October 19:

Conclusions: What can we take for today's world from Aristotle's conception of politics, particularly, his argument for the importance of virtue in politics and his recommendations about how different political regimes can avoid civil strife? (Group Presentation 2)

October 21:

*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

October 23:

The natural condition of man: natural law and natural rights

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

October 26:

The commonwealth

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

Moodle Discussion Forum 3: 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 on October 26 at 5 PM CST.**

Do you agree with Hobbes's argument about the centrality of war and violence, in general, in human life?

October 28:

Conclusions: In what ways does Hobbes's conception about the human nature, particularly, his view about the preeminence of war and violence in human life, help us to grasp the nature of politics, particularly as it happens to be practiced today? (Group Presentation 3)

October 30:

Introduction to Kant: Enlightenment and politics

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

November 2:

Kant on Human nature, history, and reason

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

November 4:

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

November 6:

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 4: *If we look at today's realities, we see a divided world, of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia, a world where nation states and national interests won the day, while international organizations like The United Nations are powerless and ineffective.*

Was Kant a naïve philosopher when he argued in favor of a cosmopolitan order? Is his project achievable? What changes would need to be done in contemporary societies, both at the individual and institutional level, so that a cosmopolitan order, in Kant's sense, might, perhaps, start coming into being?

The answers are due on November 7 at NOON CST.

November 9:

Conclusions: If we look at today's realities, we see a divided world, of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia, a world where nation states and national interests won the day, while international organizations like The United Nations are powerless and ineffective. Was Kant a naïve philosopher when he argued in favor of a cosmopolitan order? Is his project achievable? What changes would need to be done in contemporary societies, both at the individual and institutional level, so that a cosmopolitan order, in Kant's sense, might, perhaps, start coming into being? (Group Presentation 4)

November 11:

Introduction to Nietzsche: the criticism of Western philosophy and culture

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 7-27

November 13:

Nietzsche on the uses of abuses of history

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 28-49

Moodle Discussion Forum 5: 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 on November 14 at 5 PM CST**

How should modern societies engage history and, in general, public memory, so that we avoid the excesses of nationalism and enhance, instead, what Nietzsche calls life (action and creativity)? What kind of action do you think Nietzsche might have in mind?

November 16:

Conclusions: How should modern societies engage history and, in general, public memory, so they could avoid the excesses of nationalism and enhance, instead, in their individual members what Nietzsche calls life (action and creativity)? (Group Presentation 5)

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 49-64

November 18: Final Review