

CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Gov 2200 Fall 2018

Professor: Michael Hawley

Office: 209 Hubbard Hall

Office Hours: Tu 4:20-5:30 PM, Wed 1:30-3:30, or by apt.

Course Overview

Thucydides could have been speaking for Plato and Aristotle as well as himself when he claimed that he wrote his work to be a “possession for all time.” Athens in the late 5th and early 4th centuries BCE saw perhaps the greatest flourishing of political, philosophic, and cultural thought ever to occur in such a small place over so short a time. In this class, we take seriously the possibility that these thinkers may in fact have something of the highest importance to say to us—about the best way of life and the proper order of “the political things.” Following these authors, we will consider the relationship between democracy and tyranny, the tension between the needs of politics and the aims of the philosopher, and the dichotomy of the good person and the good citizen. We will investigate these authors’ arguments about virtue, justice, and the ultimate ends of political life.

Course Aims:

The primary aims of this class are those that go into determining your grade for the course. Most basically, you will gain an understanding of the questions and problems that animated classical Greek political thought. You will hone your skills at reading difficult texts carefully and evaluating arguments. You will also improve your abilities in constructing your own written arguments, demonstrating your analytical skills, and expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively.

But there is another kind of aim for this course, one that will not be reflected in your grade. The thinkers we read in this class wrote not merely for their own contemporaries but for all time. These texts are therefore addressed to you, personally. They make claims to truth about fundamental questions: What is human nature? What does the good life look like? Can you be a good person and a good citizen, or must you choose? Is the just regime possible? What, in the end, is the purpose of political life? These questions matter to each of us, both as individuals and as members of a political community. Our own life choices will inevitably presuppose answers to many of these questions. It is my hope for this class that our encounters with the authors we read will help us to think more deeply about these questions and to be more reflective citizens.

Course Books:

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Bowdoin’s textbook partner or online. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions and translations. It truly is important to get the same editions and translations; it helps keep all of us on the same page (literally) as we discuss the readings and when it comes time to write papers. All other texts will be posted on the Blackboard site.

Four Texts on Socrates, ed. Thomas G. West, Cornell
Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom, Basic Books
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Bartlett and Collins, Chicago
Aristotle, *Politics*, 2nd ed., trans. Lord, Chicago
Thucydides' *History*, Landmark edition.

Course requirements:

You will be required to write three papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced) on assigned topics. These are not research papers. The only texts you will need to write them will be what we read for this course. I will discuss the expectations and requirements for these papers at greater length in class. This class will also have a final exam. Finally, there is a participation component to your grade—which is composed both of in-class contributions as well as posts on the discussion forum on Blackboard. For the latter, you are required to post 8 reading responses (roughly 150 words each) over the course of the semester. This averages out to roughly one such response for every three class meetings, but you may distribute them however you like throughout the semester. These responses must not exceed 200 words. In them, you should raise a question, pose an objection, or make an argument about some aspect of the next day's reading. You are encouraged also to respond to posts by your fellow students. In order to count, you need to post by midnight of the day before class is to meet—I will read them before class and may incorporate some of them into our discussion.

With all of your work, be sure to follow Bowdoin standards of conduct regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate dean.

Course grade will be determined as follows:

Three Papers:	60%
Class participation	15%
Final	25%

Reading assignments:

Aug. 30	Introduction
Sept. 4	Thucydides: sections 1.1-1.45, 1.66-1.88
Sept. 6	Thucydides: 1.139-1.146, 2.13-2.17, 2.34-2.67
Sept. 11	Thucydides: pp. 3.8-3.15, 3.36-3.49, 3.52-3.84, 5.84-5.116
Sept. 13	Thucydides: 6.8-6.29, 6.61, 6.89-6.93, 7.42-7.56, 7.60-7.87
Sept. 18	Aristophanes, <i>The Clouds</i>
Sept. 20	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
Sept. 25	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
Sept. 27	Plato, <i>Republic</i> : Book I
Oct. 2	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books II-III

Oct. 4	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book IV First Paper Due
Oct. 9	FALL BREAK
Oct. 11	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book V
Oct. 16	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book VI
Oct. 18	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books VII
Oct. 23	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book VIII
Oct. 25	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books IX-X
Oct. 30	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> Book 1; Book 2: chs. 1-6
Nov. 1	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> , Book 3: chs. 1-7, 9-12; Book 4: chs. 1-5, 8-9
Nov. 6	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> , Books 5-6 Second Paper Due
Nov. 8	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> , Book 7: chs. 1-3, 9-14; Book 8: chs. 1-6, 9-13
Nov. 13	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> , Book 9: chs. 3-12; Book 10: chs. 1, 4-9
Nov. 15	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> , Book 1; Book 2: chs. 1-7
Nov. 20	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> , Book 3
Nov. 22	THANKSGIVING
Nov. 27	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> Book 4
Nov. 29	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> Book 5: chs. 1-5, 9, 11; Book 6: chs. 1-5
Dec. 4	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> Book 7 Third Paper Due
Dec. 6	Aristotle <i>Politics</i> Book 8
Dec. 12	1:30 P.M., Final Exam