

CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Gov 2200 Fall 2017

Professor Yarbrough
Office Hours: Tu-Th 4:00-5:30pm and by appointment

Office: Hubbard Hall Tower, TOP
Telephone: 725-3296

This course begins with the assumption that the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine are of much more than historical interest to us. We focus on these three thinkers because it is possible that what they thought may actually be true, and if true, or at least truer, supremely useful for us in thinking about politics today. We begin with the question: Who is Socrates? And look for one answer from Aristophanes' comic treatment of him in *The Clouds*. We then consider Socrates as Plato depicts him in *The Apology*. But mostly we focus on the Socrates of Plato's *Republic*, a dialogue that has rightly been called Socrates's true apology. Among other things we investigate the nature of the political community, the meaning and requirements of justice, the relationship between wisdom and justice (or the intellectual and the moral virtues) and the character of the best regime. The dialogue is a distinctive form of philosophic writing, combining the charm of poetry with the insights of philosophy. We pay attention not only to the **arguments**, but also to the **action** of the dialogue, much as one would in a literary work, and always keeping in mind Socrates's well-deserved reputation for **irony**.

At midpoint in the term, we take up two of Aristotle's most important political writings, *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics*. We examine such questions as What is the good for human beings? How can we attain it? What are the moral virtues, and what, in particular is the relationship between justice and friendship? What is the connection between ethics and politics? What is the best regime? Is it possible? What are the dangers threatening each regime, and how may regimes be preserved? Finally, we turn to St. Augustine's *City of God* to examine the relationship between reason and revelation, and to investigate the ways in which Christianity fundamentally altered the classical understanding of politics and of how we should live.

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Bowdoin's textbook partner, Chegg, at www.chegg.com/bookstore/bowdoin. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions and translations. Chegg advises that there are not sufficient copies of Augustine, so please order copies from Amazon at your earliest convenience.

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
Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Cambridge

Course requirements:

Students are required to write three papers on assigned topics, one on Plato and two on Aristotle. Augustine will be covered at length on the final examination. Papers should be approximately 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced, and using size 12 font. In preparing these essays, students may use only the assigned texts; no secondary sources, except translator's notes and commentary. These may be

used, but they must be paraphrased, and cited, with page numbers. If you use the commentaries, these citations may be placed in parentheses in the body of the paper. Late papers will be penalized by a minimum of 5 points. Part of the paper grade is based on quality of writing. Be sure to proofread and run a spell check. **Staple** papers. (No dog ears, paper clips, or bobby pins!) Papers must be in hard copy. **I do not accept papers mailed electronically.** There will be a take home final. Papers may be turned in at any time before the scheduled final exam date on **DECEMBER 18, 2017 at 9:00am.**

Course grade will be determined as follows:

<i>Republic, Ethics, Politics</i> papers	20 points each
Class participation	5 points (This is not automatic – regular and thoughtful participation can make a difference.)
Final	35 points

Reading assignments:

Aug. 31	Introductory Remarks
Sept. 5	Aristophanes, <i>The Clouds</i> , in West
Sept. 7	<i>Apology</i> , in West
Sept. 12	<i>Republic</i> , Book I
Sept. 14	<i>Republic</i> , Book II
Sept. 19	<i>Republic</i> , Book III
Sept. 21	<i>Republic</i> , Book IV
Sept. 26	<i>Republic</i> , Book V
Sept. 28	<i>Republic</i> , Books VI-VII
Oct. 3	<i>Republic</i> , Books VIII-IX
Oct. 5	<i>Republic</i> , Book X
Oct. 10	FALL BREAK
Oct. 12	<i>Ethics</i> , Book I
Oct. 17	<i>Ethics</i> , Book II
Oct. 19	<i>Ethics</i> , Books III-IV

Republic papers due Friday, Oct. 20

Oct. 24	<i>Ethics</i> , Books V-VI (chs. 5-13)
Oct. 26	<i>Ethics</i> , Books VIII-IX
Oct. 31	<i>Ethics</i> , Book X
Nov. 2	<i>Politics</i> , Book I, Bk II: chs. 1-5
Nov. 7	<i>Politics</i> , Book III
Nov. 9	<i>Politics</i> , Book IV

Ethics papers due Friday, Nov. 10

- Nov. 14 *Politics*, Books V-VI
 Nov. 16 *Politics*, Book VII
 Nov. 21 *Politics*, Book VIII
- Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING
- Nov. 28 *City of God*:
 Bk I: Preface and chs. 1-3, pp. 3-8; ch. 9, pp. 13-15;
 ch. 11, pp. 19-20; ch. 22, pp. 34-35; ch. 29, pp. 43-44
 Bk II: chs. 2-7, pp. 52-59; ch. 14, pp. 66-68; chs. 19-22, pp. 73-82
 Bk IV: chs. 3-4, pp. 146-148
- Nov. 30 **Bk V**: Preface and ch. 1, pp. 187-189; chs. 12-17, pp. 207-218;
 chs. 20-22, pp. 226-230; ch. 24, pp. 231-232
 Bk VIII: chs. 3-4, pp. 314-316; chs. 8-11, pp. 323-329
 Bk X: ch. 18, pp. 419-420
 Bk XI: ch. 1, pp. 449-450
 Bk XIV: chs. 1-6, pp. 581-590; chs. 10-15, pp. 602-614;
 ch. 28, pp. 632-633

Politics papers due Friday, Dec. 1

- Dec. 5 **Bk XV**: chs. 1-4, pp. 634-639
 Bk XIX: chs. 1-13, pp. 909-940
- Dec. 7 **Bk XIX**: chs. 14-28, pp. 940-964
 Bk XXI: chs. 1-3, pp. 1044-1048; ch. 11, pp. 1068-1070;
 ch. 17, pp. 1076-1077
- Dec. 18 **FINAL EXAM, 9:00am. Papers must be turned in by this time.**