

CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Gov 2200 Fall 2019

Professor Yarbrough
Office Hours: Tu-Th 4:30-6:00 pm and by appointment

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This course begins with the assumption that the writings of Plato and Aristotle are of much more than historical interest to us. We focus on these two 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 Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric and its relationship to philosophy and also to political psychology. We consider Aristotle's effort to elevate rhetoric above the level of mere manipulation by including *logos* or rational speech as one of rhetoric's key components. We also revisit his discussion of the passions and compare the treatment in *Rhetoric* with that in the *Ethics*.

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase through Bowdoin's virtual partner, eCampus at <https://bowdoin.ecampus.com/>, or from Amazon or other online sellers. But wherever you purchase your books, they must be the same edition and translation we are using as translations very enormously.

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
Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. Bartlett, Chicago

Course requirements:

Students are required to write three papers on assigned topics, one on Plato's *Republic*, one on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and one on *The Politics*. *The Clouds*, *The Apology*, and *The Rhetoric*

will be covered on the final examination. Papers should be approximately 5 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 run a spell check and then proofread. **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 comprehensive take home final. Papers may be turned in at any time before the scheduled final exam date on **DECEMBER 18 at 1:30 pm.**

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:

Sept. 5	Introductory Remarks
Sept. 10	Aristophanes, <i>The Clouds</i> , in West
Sept. 12	<i>Apology</i> , in West
Sept. 17	<i>Republic</i> , Book I
Sept. 19	<i>Republic</i> , Book II
Sept. 24	<i>Republic</i> , Book III
Sept. 26	<i>Republic</i> , Book IV
Oct. 1	<i>Republic</i> , Book V
Oct. 3	<i>Republic</i> , Books VI-VII
Oct. 8	<i>Republic</i> , Books VIII-IX
Oct. 10	<i>Republic</i> , Book X
Oct. 15	FALL BREAK
Oct. 17	<i>Ethics</i> , Book I
Oct. 22	<i>Ethics</i> , Book II
Oct. 24	<i>Ethics</i> , Books III-IV

Republic papers due Friday, Oct. 25

Oct. 29	<i>Ethics</i> , Books V-VI (chs. 5-13)
Oct. 31	<i>Ethics</i> , Books VIII-IX
Nov. 5	<i>Ethics</i> , Book X
Nov. 7	<i>Politics</i> , Book I, Bk II: chs. 1-5

Nov. 12 *Politics*, Book III
Nov. 14 *Politics*, Book IV

Ethics papers due Friday, Nov. 15

Nov. 19 *Politics*, Books V-VI
Nov. 21 *Politics*, Book VII
Nov. 26 *Politics*, Book VIII

Nov. 28 THANKSGIVING

Dec. 3 *Rhetoric*, Book I, chs. 1-10

Dec. 5 No class

Politics papers due Friday, Dec. 6

Dec. 10 *Rhetoric*, Book II, chs. 1-19; Book III, ch. 1

Dec. 18 **Take home FINAL EXAM. Papers must be turned in by 1:30 pm, Dec. 18.**