

# The Idea of Rome

## Gov 2205 Spring 2020

Professor: Michael Hawley

Office: 209C Hubbard Hall

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

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### Course Description:

The Roman Republic was one of the most successful political institutions in history. Its politics and constitution have influenced a vast tradition of subsequent regimes, thinkers, and political actors. But Rome's success also came at great cost to the peoples it conquered, and the eventual collapse of its republican institutions into autocracy has loomed large over republican imaginations ever since. In this class, we will explore Roman political thought and its legacy. We will spend most of our time on three thinkers or moments. First, we will examine the thought of Rome's greatest philosopher-statesman: Cicero, who theorized the Roman constitution just as it was disintegrating and who lost his life for his defense of the republic. Next, we will look at Niccolò Machiavelli's revival and transformation of Roman politics in Renaissance Florence. Finally, we will turn to William Shakespeare's Roman plays, which provide a still different interpretation of the lessons of Rome and would go on to influence the Anglophone world, including the American Founders.

### 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 surround Roman political thought and its legacy. 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. They are, in a sense, addressed to you. They make claims about human nature, freedom, rights, and the possibilities of politics. It is my hope for this class that our encounters with the authors we read will help you to think more deeply about these questions and to become 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.

1. Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*. Translated by Niall Rudd.
2. Cicero, *On Duties*. Translated by E.M. Atkins
3. Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives vol. 2*. Translated by Arthur Clough
4. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*. Translated by Harvey Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov.
5. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*.
6. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*.

## **Course Requirements:**

The grade for this course is made up of four components. Students will write two papers. One is a final research paper (max 15 pages), on a topic that each student will choose in consultation with me. The other is a class paper on a particular day's reading (6-8 pages). For the latter, students will explore some element or theme of the reading for a particular day, possibly connecting it other readings we have done. They will offer an interpretation of the reading that elucidates its meaning. These papers will be due exactly 48 hours before the class in question is to meet. I will then send these papers to the rest of the class.

Class participation comes in two forms. The first is discussion posts. Students are required to write at least 5 response posts on Blackboard over the course of the semester (max: 250 words). They should respond to the argument made by the day's class paper. They are due at midnight the night before class is to meet. The other form of class participation is the speaking up in class to offer helpful insights or useful questions. Class participation credit is not automatic. You owe it to yourself and your classmates to contribute to the collective learning. If I never hear from you over the course of the semester in class, you will get a 0% for that component of your grade.

## **Breakdown of Grade:**

Final paper: 50%  
Class paper: 30%  
Reading responses: 10%  
Class participation: 10%

## Reading assignments:

### Introduction: Rome's History and Institutions

Jan 22	Introduction: Why do the Romans fascinate?
Jan 27	Selection from Livy's <i>History</i> , Selection from Polybius' <i>Constitution of Rome</i> (on Blackboard)
Jan 29	Plutarch's <i>Life of Cicero</i> (pp. 408-444), Selections from Cicero's "Philippics" (the latter on Blackboard)

### Cicero's Ideal Republic

Feb 3	Cicero's <i>Republic</i> (Bk 1)
Feb 5	<i>Republic</i> , Bks 2-3
Feb 10	<i>Republic</i> Bks 5-6, <i>Laws</i> Bk 1
Feb 12	<i>Laws</i> Bk 2, selection from <i>On Divination</i> (On blackboard)
Feb 17	<i>Laws</i> Bk 3, <i>On Duties</i> , Bk 1 (sections 1-33)
Feb 19	<i>On Duties</i> , Bk 1 (sections 34-161)
Feb 24	<i>On Duties</i> Bk 2 (all)
Feb 26	<i>On Duties</i> Bk 3 (sections 1-82, 99-121)

### Machiavelli's Predatory Republic

Mar 2	Letter to Vettori, <i>Prince</i> , Dedicatory Letter, chapters 1,3,5-8, 15, 26 (on Blackboard)
Mar 4	<i>Discourses</i> : pp. 3-46

Spring Break!!!

Mar 23	<i>Discourses</i> pp. 47-81, 88-89
Mar 25	<i>Discourses</i> pp. 123-140, 143-150, 155-157, 172-175
Mar 30	<i>Discourses</i> pp. 177-184, 193-207, 209-215
Apr 1	<i>Discourses</i> pp. 215-241, 246-251, 253-260
Apr 6	<i>Discourses</i> pp. 260-284, 290-292, 299-302, 304-310

### Shakespeare's English Romans

Apr 8	Plutarch's <i>Life of Coriolanus</i> (on Blackboard), Shakespeare's <i>Coriolanus</i> Act I
Apr 13	<i>Coriolanus</i> , Acts 2-3 ( <b>Final Paper Topics must be approved by this date</b> )
Apr 15	<i>Coriolanus</i> , Acts 4-5
Apr 20	Plutarch's <i>Life of Caesar</i> ,
Apr 22	Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony</i> (pp. 481-149), <i>Life of Marcus Brutus</i> (pp.571-609)

Apr 27	<i>Julius Caesar</i> Acts 1-2
Apr 29	<i>Julius Caesar</i> Acts 3-4
May 4	<i>Julius Caesar</i> Act 5
May 6	TBD

**Final Paper Due: May 13<sup>th</sup>**