

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana Course Syllabi

Open Educational Resources (OER)

Fall 9-1-1998

PSC 350E.01: Ancient and Medieval Political Philosophy- The Classical Tradition

Ramona Grey

University of Montana - Missoula, ramona.grey@umontana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Grey, Ramona, "PSC 350E.01: Ancient and Medieval Political Philosophy- The Classical Tradition" (1998). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 8590.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/8590>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources (OER) at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Course Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

University of Montana
Political Science Department

POLS 350E
Fall 1998
MWF 2:10-3pm

Dr. Grey
Office Hrs: MWF 3-4
Office Phone: #2105

**Ancient & Medieval Political Philosophy:
The Classical Tradition**

Description of the Course:

Michael Oakeshott finds that the political philosopher usually takes a "somber view of the human situation." For the theorist human life "appears generally as a predicament." Oakeshott also finds that "every great masterpiece of political philosophy" provides us with "the glimpse of a deliverance or the suggestion of a remedy." Beginning with the Greeks, we will explore both the nature of this predicament and the way out of it. To do this we need to ask: 1) What ails the political philosopher (or us); 2) does his diagnosis of what is wrong with society or man make sense; 3) is his diagnosis relevant to our situation; 4) how does he propose to improve the human situation; and 5) will his prescription(s) make his world (let alone, ours) better?

Required Readings:

Plato, The Republic

* The Apology

Aristotle, Politics

St. Augustine, The Political Writings

Aquinas, Treatise on Law

Machiavelli, The Prince

*More, Thomas, Utopian,

* selected readings on library reserve

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Identify and assess the various tests or criteria (such as relevance, significance, or ethical considerations) that can be use to establish the value of a theoretical argument or theorist.
2. Present and orally defend (and if necessary revise) a series of interpretive, analytical essays which examine a thinker's ideas about human nature, justice, social obligation, and political legitimacy.
3. Orally critique an essay in terms of its analytical clarity, accuracy in its interpretation of the readings, and the logic of its conclusion.

4. Develop a coherent position with regards to ethical idealism and political realism, elitism and democratic doctrine, individualism and communitarianism etc. The goal of the course work, overall, is to encourage students not only to learn about Ancient and Medieval thinkers, but to learn how to think theoretically about politics.

To achieve the above objectives— Course Grading:

This course will be taught as a seminar. Each student will submit and orally defend in class four critical essays (40% of course grade), not to exceed 4 double-spaced pages. The essays will be assigned weekly and are due *no later* than the class period before you are scheduled to orally defend it. (For topics, see below.) If you are absent the day we are scheduled to discuss your essay, you will not get credit for it. At least one essay will be revised and resubmitted. In addition, each student will complete a take-home final (45% of course grade.) Finally, each student will be graded on class *participation* and attendance (15% of course grade.)

Cautionary note: if you are absent more than 3xs, three attendance points will be deducted for every absence thereafter. Excused absences require a medical note for illness, injury, family emergency, or letter from instructor for field trips, ASUM service, music/drama performances, intercollegiate athletics, military service. Instructor will also excuse absences for reasons of mandatory public service.

Course Schedule:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 8/31 | Introduction to the Course |
| 9/2 | Political Theory & the Search for Standards |
| 9/4 | Plato's Version of the Predicament Read: Plato, <u>Republic</u> Books I & II |
| 9/7 | Labor Day Holiday |
| 9/9- 9/11 | Essays (due 9/9 by 11 pm): Is Thrasymachus a spokesman for the City? |
| 9/14 | Read: <u>Republic</u> , Book III Essays (due 9/11): Is Thrasymachus a political realist? Why, why not? |
| 9/16- 9/18 | Glaucon v. Plato's Prescriptions: The Ideal Polis Read: <u>Republic</u> , Books IV & V |

- 9/21* **Essays (due 9/18):** Why is it important to Plato that the education of the Guardians be so strict and so long?
- 9/23 **The City verses the Philosopher**
Read: Republic, Books VI & VII
The Apology (on reserve)
- 9/25 **Essays (due 9/23):** The Philosopher— King?
- 9/28-9/30 **Essays (due 9/25):** Examine the male-female roles in Plato's Republic. How "radical" is Plato's utopia with respect to women?
- 10/2 **Plato's Critics: Anti-Utopianism**
Recommend: Popper, *The Open Society & Its Enemies*
Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*
- 10/5 Read: Republic, Book VIII
Essays (due 10/2): "Plato did not understand democracy."
- 10/7 **The Decline of the Ideal State: Plato's Apologists**
Read: Aristotle, Politics, Books I & II (Chaps. 1-8).
- 10/9-10/12 **Aristotle's Biological Analysis of Politics**
Read: Aristotle, Politics, Book III (Chaps. 6-18)
- 10/12-10/14 Read: Politics, Book IV (Chaps. 1-8; 11-12)
Essays (due 10/12): The difference between Plato & Aristotle is the eternal difference between the radical and the conservative.
- 10/16 **Aristotle & the Classifications of Governments**
Read: Politics, Book V (Chaps. 1-4).
Essays (due 10/14): What does Aristotle mean by "justice" and "the rule of law?" Are they the same? Why, why not?
- 10/19 **St. Augustine & City of Man**
Read: St. Augustine, The Political Writings, Chap. 1, pp. 1-15, pp. 28-43.

* September 21st is last add/drop day by dial bear.

- 10/21-
10/23 **St. Augustine cont.**
Read: St. Augustine, The Political Writings, Chap. 2, pp. 44-88; Chap. 3, pp. 118-162.
Essays (due 10/21): "What is lacking in Plato's *ethics* is present in that of Christianity: the Day of Judgment." Is this Judgment important to ethical theory? Why, why not? Discuss
- 10/26 **St. Augustine & the Two Cities**
Read: The Political Writings, Chap. 3, pp. 162-183;
Essays (due 10/23): How does St Augustine's conception of the *Two Cities* posed in acute form the problem of separation between church and state? Or does it?
- 10/28 **St. Augustine's Idea of the "Just" War**
Read: The Political Writings, Appendix.
Essays (due 10/26): The "Just" War?
- 10/30-
11/2 **St. Thomas Aquinas & Political Theology**
Read: St. Thomas, Treatise on Law
- 11/4 **St. Thomas' & the Hierarchy of Law**
Read: Thomas More, Utopia (on reserve),
Essays (due 11/2): "The higher we climb on Aquinas' natural law ladder, the further away from the human condition we get; but, as we climb down, the further away we get from God. Either way, something precious is lost."
- 11/6 **St. Thomas cont.**
Read: More's *Utopia* Book I (on reserve)
Essays (due 11/4): "The seeds of disloyalty to civil rulers are inherent in St. Thomas' conception of law."
- 11/9 **Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*: Heaven on Earth?**
Read: More's *Utopia* Book I (on reserve)
- 11/11 **Holiday**
- 11/13 **More's Legal System: Justice on Earth**
Read: More's *Utopia* Book II (on reserve)
Essays (due 11/9): More's utopia has courts without lawyers? Possible? Desirable?

- 11/16** **More's Naturalism**
Essays (due 11/13): What tastes/appetites are (or would be) given free reign and what tastes/appetites are suppressed when we look around More's utopia?
- 11/18** **Plato & More: Eugenics**
Recommend: John M. Smith, "Eugenics & Utopia," *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel
Essays (due 11/16): Compare and contrast Plato and More on the role of marriage & childrearing. Is one utopia superior to another? Why, why not?
- 11/20** **Illness & Death in More's Utopia**
Essays (due 11/18): What type of treatment for illness, disease, accident, and death might we expect in More's utopia? Does his provisions (if any) for public health care tarnish his utopian vision?
- 11/23** **Renaissance Reaction to Medieval Thought**
Read: Machiavelli, The Prince
- 11/25-11/29** **Thanksgiving Break**
- 11/30** **Machiavelli's World & Contribution**
Read: Machiavelli, The Prince— finish
- 12/2** **Machiavelli's Concept of Human Nature, Society, & Power**
- 12/4** **Machiavelli cont.**
Essays (due 12/2): The Prince is a very disturbing book. The question is why?
- 12/7** **Machiavelli's Power & Virtue**
Essays (due 12/4): What are the limits of power (ethical or otherwise) for Machiavelli?
- 12/9** **Machiavelli's Rules for State's Craft: The Political Realist?**
- 12/11** **Machiavelli's Realism cont.**
Essays (due 12/9) : "The consummate realist is the way I would describe Machiavelli." Yes? No? Why, why not?

Final Due by 5pm on December 15th.