

University of Montana
Political Science
Classical and Medieval Political Philosophy:
Graduate Seminar

PSCI 557 (Co-convening with PSCI U457)
Fall 2020
TTR 9:30-10:50am

Dr. Grey
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Description of the Course:

This co-convening course examines canonical “classical” political thinkers from Plato to Machiavelli. Graduate students will consider a fundamental question: *what is the purpose of political inquiry?* A fundamental question precisely because what people take to be the purpose of political theory determines what they study, who they study, and how they study it. Additionally, we will consider: what is ‘classical’ about Plato and Augustine’s political thought? What is ‘modern,’ say, about Machiavelli’s political thought? What distinguishes the kinds of questions these political theorist raises from, perhaps, those of philosophers, historians, or (political) scientists? And is there one, two, or more than two *approaches* to reading and interpreting classical political theory tracts?

Required prerequisite:

Successful completion of an upper-division political theory course or an instructor approved equivalent course.

Required Readings:

Plato, The Apology, The Republic (see recommended texts below)

St. Augustine, The Political Writings

Aquinas, Treatise on Law

Machiavelli, The Prince

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, 1958

Leo Strauss, Natural Right & History, 1965.

Susan Moller Okin, Women in Western Political Thought, 1979.

** Quentin Skinner, Visions of Politics, 2002, selected readings (available online)

*see library editions or interlibrary load copies (see Dr. Grey if having difficulties.)

** see other selected readings under essay assignments

Recommend:

Grey, R. Political Theory & The Human Predicament: An Introduction to Major Political Thinkers, 2018 (2nd edition).

The Republic of Plato, trans. by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1968

Mary L Shanley & Carol Pateman, eds Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory, 1977.

Course Learning Outcomes: after successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Distinguish between a normative, a scientific/historical, and analytical approaches to theorizing, and recognize how political theorists combine each of these approaches in their work.
2. Develop concise, analytic essays on the assigned primary and secondary texts. Specifically, with regards to an analytic perspective, students will consider their own position with respect to different approaches to studying political theory (for instance,

what consequences follow when one emphasizes text over context when studying political theory?)

3. Evaluate a political theory in terms of its analytic, empirical, and normative claims, and its strengths and/or weaknesses.

4. Orally critique an essay in terms of its analytical clarity, accuracy in its interpretation of the readings, and the logic of its conclusion.

Political philosophy. . . “is a complex, imprecise, psychologically demanding, imagination-requiring field of enquiry, in which nothing like certainty can ever be obtained, only, at the most, a high degree of plausibility and coherence and evidence of intellectual power and originality and effectiveness.”

--Isaiah Berlin

To achieve the above objectives— Course Grading (Total Points: 150):

This course will be taught as a seminar **remotely via synchronous Zoom**. Each graduate student will submit and orally defend in class **4 critical essays** (15 pts each), not to exceed 4 double-spaced pages (or **1,500** words) in a Word doc & posted on Moodle. **Please number essay paragraphs for reference in class discussions.** (For topics, see below.) **Sign-up sheet is posted on Moodle; please email to Prof. Grey which 2 G & 2 UG essay prompts you wish to address.** If you are absent the day we are scheduled to discuss your essay, you will not get credit for it. Essays assigned to graduate students will presume student has some familiarity with the major political thinkers covered in this co-convening course. Graduate student essays will draw upon both primary theory texts and secondary interpretive literature.

Since *it does not honor a writer to read him/her without seeking to challenge him/her*, graduate students will be required to submit two written questions for each of the essays distributed and discussed (10 pts.)

In addition to completing the above essay assignments, graduate students will submit a **20-25-page professional research paper** (50 pts) in consultation with the professor. This paper should clearly identify and address a question or issue covered by the thinkers (or a thinker) in the course, and reference the appropriate primary & secondary literature to support its thesis.

Graduate students enrolled in the Political Science M.A. degree program will complete a take-home comprehensive field exam in political theory.

To assist with developing an advanced level political theory research paper and preparing for their field exam, graduate students will meet together each month with the professor. Time, date, and place of the meeting will to be determined.

Cautionary note: Graduate students are expected to attend class and participate in the discussions (and not staring at their laptops). 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 and jury duty.

COVID-19 note: Wearing a mask in class is mandatory. **All students with cough/flu-like symptoms should NOT attempt to come to ANY in-person class.** Although you may still feel able to attend the in-person class, by doing so you put **others around**

you at risk. As healthy graduates, you are not the most “at risk” sector of our population, but it is your responsibility to do your part to make sure that you do not transmit the virus to others who might be at risk (including student peers and many faculty and staff who are older and at much greater risk.) If you are sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330, please let me know if you are sick. Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php> We strongly encourage you to remain vigilant outside the classroom in mitigating the spread of COVID-19

Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please present the instructor with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DDS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested accommodations.

The instructor has attempted to make all course materials accessible. If you find course material that has barriers to accessibility, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so the oversight can be corrected as quickly as possible.

Tentative Course Schedule:

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| 8/20 | Introduction to the Course: Classical & Medieval Political Philosophy
Read: Plato, <u>The Apology</u> ; <u>Republic</u> Books I, II; Alan Bloom’s “Interpretive Essay, <u>The Republic Of Plato</u> ; |
| 8/25 | Plato’s Indictment: Review of <u>The Republic</u>
Read: <u>Republic</u> , Books II-III |
| 8/27 | Thrasymachus v. Socrates
Read: <u>Republic</u> , Books IV & V
UG Essays (due 8/26 please post on Moodle by 12pm): Is Thrasymachus a political realist? Why, why not? If so, then how do we explain his anger? |
| 9/1 | No Class: Read & Draft Essays
Read: <u>Republic</u> , Book IV:
Recommend: James Colaiaco, <u>Socrates Against Athens: Philosophy on Trial</u> , New York: Routledge, 2001. |
| 9/3 | Thrasymachus v Socrates cont.
Read: <u>Republic</u> , Book VI & Book VII;
G Essays (due 9/2 posted on Moodle by 2pm): According to Bloom, what makes Thrasymachus a spokesman for the City? Do you agree with him? And do all city-states or governments define justice in the way that Thrasymachus does?
G Essays (due 9/3): What does Strauss mean by “natural right” and how does it assume about the meaning & nature of |

justice? Could Julie Annas' complaint against Plato's notion of justice (see UG essay prompt under 9/22) apply to Strauss' notion of "natural right?" Why, why not?

- 9/8 Thrasymachus v. Glaucon
UG Essays (due 9/3): How does Glaucon's definition of justice differ from Thrasymachus, or does it? Is Glaucon more of a political realist than Thrasymachus? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 9/10-
9/15 Plato's Critics & Defense: The Trial of Socrates (*U Honors Section*)
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I; Karl Popper, *The Open Society & Its Enemies: The Spell of Plato*, vol. 1, chaps. 1, 6-9; Strauss, *Natural Right & History*, Chaps. 1-2.
Recommended Readings: Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*; Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, see title chapter
"Strauss, Philosophy, and Politics," (Symposium) *Political Theory*, August 1987
***Rothman, Stanley, 'The Revival of Classical Political Philosophy: A Critique,' *The American Political Science Review*, 56 (June 1962), 341-52.
Herbert Storing (ed.) *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*
A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*
Ernest Fortin, "Gadamer on Strauss," *Interpretation*, Jan. 1984
Shadia Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1988)
Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (1997);
George Bruce Smith, "Leo Strauss and the Straussians: An Anti-democratic Cult?", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, vol. 3 No. 2 (June 1997);
Seymour Hersh, "Selective Intelligence," *The New Yorker*, 12 May 2003;
David Schaefer, "The Legacy of Leo Strauss: A Bibliographic Introduction," *The Intercollegiate Review*, Summer 1974: 139-148.
- U Essays (due 9/8): As a prosecuting council on behalf of Athens, please write a brief laying out Socrates' crimes, why he is guilty and should be punished accordingly (based upon the Apology). You may also recommend what punishment he should receive for his crimes.
- U Essays (due 9/10): As a defense council at Socrates' trial, please write a brief defending the old philosopher & his vocation. Be sure you address the specific charges against him (in the Apology).
- G Essays (due 9/10):** What do you consider the most serious criticisms that Karl Popper levels against Plato's ideal city-state? Can a case be made in defense of Plato against these criticisms? If so, on what grounds? If not, why not? Please explain.
- 9/17-
9/22 Plato's Critics & Defense: The Trial of Socrates- final verdict
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II (Chaps. 1-8); Strauss, *Natural Right & History*, Chaps. 3-4.
UG Essay (due 9/15): Socrates may not have been a democrat, but there is nothing in his position that is inherently opposed to democracy. Do you agree? Would you have sided with Athens or with Socrates?

UG Essays (due 9/17): In her reading of Plato's Republic, Julia Annas complains that Plato wants it both ways: justice to be good for the individual and also good in a way that has no reference to anybody or anything in particular. In short, he fails to answer the question: Why should I be just?" Is this a problem particular to Plato, or all justice-seeking political theorist? What are the problems of favoring one side of this dilemma or the other?

9/24

The City verses the Philosopher

Read: Republic, Book VIII; Okin, "Philosopher Queens & Private Wives," Women in Western Political Thought, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979, pp. 28-50.

U Essays (due 9/22): According to Plato, why are philosophers or those with wisdom not ruling us? Are they to blame or are we? Does Plato's view of 'human predicament' still have relevance for us today? If so, why so? If not, why not?

UG Essays (due 9/22): Plato may not have been fond of democracy; and yet, some of his recommendations for achieving a just society might actually make our contemporary democracy stronger? Discuss

G Essays (due 9/24): Allen Bloom thinks that Plato is radical (and deliberately being outrageous) in proposing women rulers and worriers. On the other hand, Okin argues that Plato's view of communal wives among the guardians is fundamentally conservative. Based upon his ideal city-state, are Plato's views on women radical or conservative? Finally, what might Plato think of being labeled a feminist?

9/29

Aristotle's Classifications of Constitutions

Read: Aristotle, Politics, Book III (Chaps. 6-18); Book V (Chaps. 1-8; 11-12); Politics, Book V (Chaps. 1-4); Arendt, The Human Condition

U Essays (due 9/24): What does Aristotle mean by justice" and "the rule of law?" Are they the same? Why, why not?

UG Essay (due 9/24): Please describe what constitutes 'justice' for Plato & Aristotle, and how and where do they each find this justice? Please identify at what point they shift from questions of 'justice-seeking' to questions of 'knowledge-seeking'?

G Essays (due 9/29): Jeffery Hart lists one variety of conservative thought as "Natural law conservatism," which deduces principles of behavior from the fact of 'human' nature as distinct from other kinds of nature, and on that account resists moral change based on fashion, historical accident, or false analogies between human nature and other kinds. Conservatism of this kind, he thinks, "is found in Aristotle, Aquinas, Burke, and today in *Leo Strauss*" (italics added.) In light of your reading, discuss this statement.

10/1

Aristotle & Political Life

Read: St. Augustine, The Political Writings, Chap. 1, pp. 1-15, pp. 28-43; St. Augustine, The Political Writings, Chap. 2, pp. 44-88

UG Essays (due 9/29): In saying that man is a 'political' animal Aristotle meant much more than we mean by political. What all does he suggests being 'political' mean, and how does it compare with our meaning of being 'political' today? Could we benefit from his notion of politics?

UG Essays (due 9/29): Aristotle could not possibly accept the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number as a proper definition of the purpose of a polis. Why not?

G Essays (due 10/1): How does Arendt's distinction between public and private relate to her distinction between work and labor. . .or does it?

G Essays (due 10/1): What do you see as the analytical weaknesses of Arendt's *distinction between public and private*? On the other hand, what do you find are the strengths of her distinction?

G Essays (due 10/1): Evidently, Arendt embraces a 'positive' conception of freedom. In fact, she suggests a distinction between 'freedom' and 'liberty.' How does this distinction relate to her notion of private and public realms? According to Arendt, what constitutes "true liberty"?

10/6

St. Augustine & City of Man

Read: St. Augustine, The Political Writings, Chap. 3, pp.118-162.

UG Essays (due 10/1): "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

10/8-
10/13

St. Augustine & the Two Cities; the Idea of "Just War"

Read: The Political Writings, Chap. 3, pp. 162-183; Appendix; St. Thomas, Treatise on Law

UG Essays (due 10/6): 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?

UG Essays (due 10/8): The "Just" War? What are Augustine's criteria for a just war? Is this an ethically or practically criteria useful? Why, why not?

10/15-

St. Thomas Aquinas & Political Theology

- 10/20 Read: St. Thomas, Treatise on Law
UG Essays (due 10/15): For St. Aquinas 'law is perfectly compatible with the freedom proper to man.' What does he mean? Do you agree? Why, why not?
- 10/22- St. Thomas & the Hierarchy of Law cont.
 10/27 Read: Machiavelli, The Prince; Strauss, pp. 165-202.
UG Essays (due 10/20): "The seeds of disloyalty to civil rulers are inherent in ST. Thomas' conception of law."
UG Essays (due 10/22): "The higher we climb on Aquinas' ladder of laws, 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."
- 10/29 Machiavelli's World & Contribution
 Read: Machiavelli, The Prince; Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *Against the Current*, 1979
 Recommend: Hannah Pitkin, Fortune Is A Woman (1989)
 U Essays (due 10/27): The Prince is a very disturbing book. The question is why?
G Essays (due 10/29): According to Isaiah Berlin, what has made Machiavelli's political theory disturbing (especially to thinkers like Strauss?) Does Berlin find Machiavelli's politics disturbing? Why, why not?
- * * * * * Tuesday November 3rd Election Day: No Class * * * * ***
- 11/5 Machiavelli's Rules for State's Craft: The Political Realist
- 11/10- Machiavelli's Realism?
 11/17 U Essays (due 11/5): What are the limits of power (ethical or otherwise) for Machiavelli?
 U Essays (due 11/5): For Machiavelli what appears to be the purpose of studying politics? Does his method of inquiry leave anything out?
 U Essays (due 11/10): "The consummate *realist* is the way I would describe Machiavelli." Why, why not?
 U Essays (due 11/12): "The consummate *utopian* is the way I would describe Machiavelli." Why, why not?
G Essays (due 11/10): Please describe *what* constitutes 'knowledge' for Machiavelli, and how and where does he suggest we might gain political knowledge? Taking his work as one example, what does it suggest are some characteristics of a knowledge-seeking approach in "modern" theory?

G Essays (due 11/10): Does Quintin Skinner avoid blending his historical approach with justice-seeking into his own studies of Machiavelli? What ‘analytical’ problems to you find in his interpretation of Machiavelli’s political ideas?

Essay Writing & Grading Guidelines:

1st: Please: put the [essay question/statement](#) on the top of your paper. . .

Thesis & Transitions – 20%

- Clear, thoughtful, and coherent thesis statement that addresses essay question/statement
- Thesis placed at end of 1st paragraph
- Stays focused on essay topic

Analysis – 65%

- Strong supporting evidence, drawn from reading material for the **thesis**
- Provides relevant information, clearly presented
- Fully developed, *interesting* arguments and points
- Analysis and conclusions are logical and precise
- Shows that the writer understands the author’s argument, logic, and moral reasoning before critiquing or defending his/her argument
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Format, Word Choice, Mechanics & Quotations 15%

- Format: 4 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, good transition sentences between paragraphs and tight topic organization
- Quotations: Inserted in body with page number, relevant to point, not taken out of context, best summary of thinker’s view

Don't editorialize! Give us nothing but your opinion w/no reference to our reading.

Don't give us a book review! No rehashing of lecture notes or quote for the sake of quoting. # (Too much narration/description.)

Don't quote Wikipedia or Dictionary for definitions! Instead provide your own ideas and criteria for the meaning of key political terms.

Some General tips for Good Writing:

1. Good writing stems from good thinking. Clarify your intent & major ideas before you start. Don't expect that your design will materialize during writing.

A good outline can help organize your ideas. Sketch out your major points and their logical relationship.

2. Be a master builder. Your building blocks are sentences and paragraphs. Each essay should have a specific theme; each paragraph should have a specific purpose regarding that theme; and each sentence should have a specific purpose in its paragraph.

3. Good writing results from revision. First drafts are almost always lousy writing. Samuel Johnson said, “What is written in haste is read without pleasure.” Please note!

4. Become your own best editor. If you are committed to your ideas, you will be willing to revise and revise until they are expressed clearly.

5. “Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity,” Henry David Thoreau admonished. His advice applies to composition as well as to life. Use clear-cut syntax and active voice (passive voice tends to distract & obscure.) Avoid unnecessary verbiage, such as “first and foremost” instead of “first.” A good writer, said Thomas Jefferson, can use one word instead of three.

6. Be precise in your diction. Avoid a \$100 word when a \$5 word will do. “Never,” said George Orwell, “use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.”

7. And “if it is possible to cut a word out,” Orwell added, “cut it out.” Carefully selected nouns and verbs rarely require adjectives and adverbs.

8. Don’t be a hedger. If you believe in your purpose and conclusions, be positive and bold. Tentativeness undercuts your credibility. Avoid, for example, “it seems,” “perhaps,” “somewhat,” “it appears,” etc. I call these ‘chicken words.’

9. Keep your reader in mind. Guide the reader through your train of thought. Keep the reader awake by varying the length and beginning of sentences. Keep the reader involved by providing interesting examples, transitions, and conclusions. Use short and apt quotations and paraphrase the rest.

10. Be technically correct. Grammar and spelling errors tell the reader that you are careless. Read your writing aloud to catch your mistakes.

Research Paper & Comprehensive Field Exam Due Wednesday November 25th by 12pm.