



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

POLI 2510 Ancient and Medieval Political Thought
Political Science Department
Fall 2023
Mondays & Wednesdays 8:30-10 am via Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Mathie

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Office Hours: Thursday 3 pm - 5:30 pm, or by appointment, via Zoom.

Course Description and Objectives

In this course in ancient and medieval political philosophy, we will closely read and study key works by ancient and medieval western thinkers that explore difficult and enduring questions about human nature and how human beings can live well together, especially in political associations. Such questions include: What is justice? What is human excellence or virtue? Is there a best way for human beings to live? What limits, if any, does human nature put on politics? What can justify the rule of one or more human beings over others? What tensions exist between the good of the political community as a whole and the good of individuals within it? What role does friendship have in human flourishing and in political life?

Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle wrestled with such questions in the *Republic* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* so profoundly that these ancient books lie at the heart of debates in Western political thought to this day. Their writings influenced the medieval political thought of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas who were greatly concerned with the same questions. At the same time, Christian doctrines about the relationship between human beings and the Divine led medieval thinkers to some radically different interpretations of virtue, justice, the good life and the relationships individuals ought to have with one another and with their political communities in both the *City of God* and *On Kingship*.

In this course, students will not merely examine and analyse key writings by these thinkers with a view to learning important theories and concepts advanced within these writings. The questions raised by ancient and medieval political philosophers are not dryly theoretical - human beings' answers to these questions have shaped political history, and our consideration of these questions has practical consequences for our own societies, friendships and lives. This course will require students to directly participate and to engage in a variety of forms of experiential learning in order to foster their ability to freely and thoughtfully consider and confront the timeless questions about human life and politics that ancient and medieval political philosophers raise. Although I will sometimes lecture in this course, our classes will proceed as much as possible by discussion. In order to engage well in class discussions, students will have to be diligent in carefully preparing the complex and difficult texts which we will consider each class, and be humble, thoughtful and open in

class sessions. Ultimately, this course is designed to foster students' abilities to: (a) read complex and nuanced texts and arguments with care, insight and reflection; (b) compose written work about ancient and medieval political philosophy that is thoughtful, well-reasoned and clear; and (c) engage in free, respectful and reasoned discussion with others about profoundly important human questions.

Course Requirements

Required Texts:

You must have either digital or paper copies of the **exact translations identified below** for this course. Many freely available translations/editions of the required readings are not very good or literal, and it is important for our discussions that we all have the same texts to reference. Please see my email on purchasing required texts for more information about how to get the correct books.

Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books) ISBN-13: 978-0465069347

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins (University of Chicago) ISBN-13: 978-0226026756

Reading packages (pdfs or urls to be posted on d2l):

- Selections from Livy, *History of Rome* and Augustine, *City of God*.
- Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship: to the King of Cyprus*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia-IIae Q. 105, A. 1.

Grading:

Assignments: 10% (2, worth 5% each)

Paper: 25%

Midterm: 20%

Quizzes: 10%

Participation: 10%

Final Exam: 25%

Assignments: Small assignments will be due at 5 pm on Sunday September 24, and at 5 pm on Sunday November 5 (instructions to be provided on d2l). Late assignments will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions may be requested in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

Paper: Papers will be 5-7 pages and due on Sunday November 26, at 11:59 pm (instructions to be provided on d2l). Late papers will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions may be requested in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

Quizzes: Short open book reading quizzes will be administered at the start of class through d2l every week or so throughout the semester. Because these quizzes are intended to ensure that students are keeping up with assigned readings, they will not be announced ahead of time. Students will be required to take the quiz with their zoom cameras on (mics muted). There will not be an opportunity to retake missed quizzes, but your lowest quiz score will be dropped at the end of the term, and there will be an extra credit opportunity that students will be able to substitute for an additional quiz score.

Participation: All students are expected to:

- 1) Read assigned material carefully before it is discussed in class.
- 2) **Have working Zoom cameras and turn them on throughout the entirety of our class sessions.**
- 3) Be prepared to discuss or answer questions about the readings over Zoom.
- 4) Have hard or digital copies of the readings with them during the Zoom seminar.
- 5) Avoid: (a) excessive absences from or lateness to our seminars; (b) being or appearing inattentive to seminars; (c) engaging in conversations with others outside of the Zoom seminar during class time.

Participation marks are not free:

- Consistently meeting these expectations will earn a mark in the B range (70-79%).
- Consistently meeting these expectations AND regularly participating thoughtfully in our discussions will be required for a mark in the A range (80-100%).
- Failure to follow even one of the expectations may result in an extremely low grade.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

PLAGIARISM INVOLVES PRESENTING ANOTHER'S WORK, IDEAS, THEORIES, OR INTERPRETATION AS ONE'S OWN.

To avoid plagiarism, always:

- 1) Put quotation marks around any words taken from sources.
- 2) Paraphrase material completely; do not simply rearrange words from a source or change them using a thesaurus, etc.
- 3) Whether it is being quoted or paraphrased in your work, always give accurate and complete citations for all material that comes from another source.
- 4) Avoid borrowing entire arguments or ideas from another writer. Your arguments should be original to you.

Generative AI Use Prohibited

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variants Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity ("Use of Unauthorized Materials").

Academic Accommodations: Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities/medical conditions. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities/medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability/medical condition and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information,

please email sas@lakeheadu.ca or visit <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

Course Outline

NOTE: Readings and schedule may be adjusted as necessary at my discretion. Of course, Zoom discussions pose special challenges, so as we proceed with the seminar, I may find it necessary to make some changes with the structure of class discussions. I greatly appreciate your flexibility and understanding.

Sept 6	Course outline/introduction
Sept 11	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , up to 336b in Book I
Sept 13	<i>Republic</i> , remainder of Book I
Sept 18	<i>Republic</i> , Book II
Sept 20	<i>Republic</i> , Book III, starting at 398b.
Sept 25	<i>Republic</i> , Book IV
Sept 27	<i>Republic</i> , Book V
Oct 2	<i>Republic</i> , Book VI
Oct 4	<i>Republic</i> , Book VII (to 520b)
Oct 9-13	Fall Study Week - NO CLASSES
Oct 16	<i>Republic</i> , Book VIII
Oct 18	<i>Republic</i> , Book IX
Oct 23	Midterm
Oct 25	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I
Oct 30	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II, Ch. 1, 3, 5-9; Book III, Ch. 6-12
Nov 1	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IV, Ch. 1-4, 9
Nov 6	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book V, Ch. 1-5, 7, 9-11
Nov 8	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VI, Ch. 1-2, 5, 12-13; Book VII
Nov 13	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VIII
Nov 15	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IX
Nov 20	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book X
Nov 22	Selections from Livy, <i>History of Rome</i> and Augustine, <i>City of God</i> (available on d2l)
Nov 27	Thomas Aquinas, <i>On Kingship</i> , "To the King of Cyprus," Book I, Chapters 1-6
Nov 29	<i>On Kingship</i> , Book I, Chapters 7-12; Book II, Chapters 1-4
Dec 4	<i>On Kingship</i> , Book II, Chapters 5-8; <i>Summa Theologiae</i> Ia-IIae Q. 105, A. 1

(available on d2l)