



Lakehead University  
*Ancient and Medieval Political Thought (2023)*  
POLI-2510-WA  
TTh 2:30-4:00

Professor: Dr. Patrick Cain (Political Science)  
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Office hours: T/Th 3:45-4:00 in RB 1044 (or by appointment)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES**

This course focuses on central ancient and medieval thinkers with the purpose of introducing students to some of the most important political thinkers and concepts in the tradition. These writers provide us with a series of inquiries into how we should live, and the relationship of that question to political life. In doing so, they provocatively raise questions of justice, virtue, freedom, equality and the best political order.

Our classes will proceed as much as possible through discussion, guided by the aim of achieving an understanding of timeless political arguments in a way that allows for a critical perspective on the politics and ethical practices of our own time. Students are expected to engage these important political questions through a number of robust experiential exercises and assignments, some of which will happen synchronously and asynchronously in place of scheduled class time.

This course's examination of these questions is meant to (a) develop and enhance students' ability to freely partake in the art of thoughtful and reasoned discussion about the most important human questions; and (b) enhance student's ability to individually and co-operatively analyze texts and arguments. To achieve these objectives, students will have to come to class having diligently studied the complex and difficult texts under consideration, and prepared to engage the readings through thoughtful, charitable, and reasoned discussion.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

## Required Texts and Translations

### For Purchase

Plato, *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Basic Books

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Univ. Of Chicago Press. Trans. Bartlett and Collins

### Ebook (available through LU Library)

Nichols, Mary P., *Aristotle's Discovery of the Human* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2023); ebook available through LU Library.

## Grading

Course Assignments: 3.5% X 10 = 35%

Class Participation: 25%

In Person Final Exam: 40%

In addition to the specific assignment requirements, here are some general guidelines for students hoping to achieve high marks in this course:

(a) Thoroughly read and analyze essential texts and ideas with care and insight, considering the questions raised and how their arguments illuminate ongoing political questions as well as our own lives and the political systems in which we live.

(b) Charitably engage your fellow students in deep and reasoned conversation about the arguments being made and the issues at stake, including through friendly disagreement that seeks a better understanding of the arguments being studied.

(c) Seek to comprehend the arguments made by the assigned authors, starting with the assumption that these writers can teach us something—that they have likely thought more profoundly about the issue at hand (and their own arguments) than we have as readers. This will be especially crucial if and when arguments diverge from the conventional wisdom of our times. While it is natural for discussions to deviate from the text's specific arguments, particularly when considering their application to current political events and issues, students should attempt to do so in concert with the thoughtful engagement with the text and its arguments.

## **Course Assignments**

Class assignments are typically designed to encourage, develop and measure students' preparation for class time, including the degree to which they have engaged and comprehended the assigned reading in preparation for in-class discussion. Some will take place during class time. Assignments therefore cannot be made up if missed, and cannot be handed in late. However, in order to accommodate excused absences and events, some assignments may be missed without penalty: at least 13 assignments will be available to students, with only 10 counting toward the final grade. In other words, all **accommodations for these assignments (including those for excused absences) are already built into the assignment structure.**

## **Class Participation**

The readings from this course involve complicated ideas and difficult arguments. Moreover, the presentation of these ideas and arguments sometimes take forms that may not be familiar to students. Students should therefore read the assigned readings carefully, slowly, and several times.

Although the professor will occasionally lecture, much of class will be spent in discussion of the assigned readings, in-class oral arguments, and other issues related to the course. Students are expected to fully participate in this discussion. To do so, students should: 1. Read assigned material carefully; 2. Bring the readings to class; 3. Be prepared to discuss the readings; 4. Be attentive and avoid appearing inattentive.

Although the professor will facilitate discussion in a number of ways (such as playing "devil's advocate"), students should be prepared enough to drive the discussion themselves. In order to facilitate discussion, and in order to allow the lectures to be executed in the most effective manner, students are required to follow the seating direction of the professor.

As noted, regular attentive attendance is a key component of participation. Students are expected to regularly participate in fully engaged, non-distracted discussion. Cell phone use during class time is not allowed and laptop use is strongly discouraged. Often there will be periods of discussion when all laptops must be closed.

No audio or video recording of the class is allowed without the written permission of the professor, and any permitted recording will for be only for the private use of the individual to whom the permission is given and cannot be distributed under any circumstances. Failures to follow this recording policy will result in a mark of 0/25% for participation, and a plagiarism complaint will be brought against the student.

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policy in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

*Plagiarism involves presenting another's words, work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.*

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing (with the help of a thesaurus) or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is not paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material *including paraphrased material.*
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters.

## **Academic Honesty and Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems or programs that can perform tasks that would typically require human intelligence. Unless otherwise noted, the use of artificial intelligence is not permitted in the completion of classwork.

All permitted use of AI must be noted and referenced by students. This must take the form of a note at the beginning of the student's work that explains what AI tools were used, and the ways in which they were used. This includes all editing and/or research. If permitted AI is used, the professor is likely to conduct a discussion with the student to judge the extent to which they comprehend the submitted material, and will adjust the mark accordingly. *AI is not a legitimate source for information, as it does not itself cite its sources.*

If the professor suspects that AI has been used in a way that violates the above policies, a plagiarism case will be opened and a meeting with the student will be scheduled. The determining factor in deciding these cases is simply the preponderance of evidence. Students who submit work that they cannot explain, or who submit work that is written at a level far above their demonstrated capabilities, should expect their work to fail this test. *Any unpermitted use of AI will result in a mark of zero on the assignment and a plagiarism charge.*

Use of web search and spell checking tools do not fall under this policy.

## **Accessibility and Accommodation**

Students with accessibility issues or with requested accommodations are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

## **READING SCHEDULE**

*The reading schedule will be altered as needed at the professor's discretion to accommodate the pace of class, emphasizing deep learning over breadth of coverage*

- 1/9 Course Outline
- 1/11 Plato, Republic, Book I (327a-336a)
- 1/16 Plato, Republic, Book I (336a-end)
- 1/18 Strauss, Intro to Plato's Republic, Course Lecture, 1961
- 1/23 Plato, Republic VIII
- 1/25 Plato, Republic IX
- 1/30 TBA
- 2/1 Aristotle, Ethics I, ch. 1-7
- 2/6 Aristotle, Ethics I
- 2/8 Aristotle, Ethics II
- 2/13 Aristotle, Ethics III, ch. 1-7
- 2/15 Aristotle, Ethics III, ch. 8-end
- 2/20 Study Week
- 2/22 Study Week
- 2/27 Aristotle, Ethics IV, ch. 1-7
- 2/29 Aristotle, Ethics IV, ch. 8-end
- 3/5 TBA

- 3/7 Thomas Aquinas on Truth  
<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3109.htm>
- 3/12 Thomas Aquinas on Lying  
<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3110.htm>
- 3/14 Aristotle, Ethics VI, ch. 3, 5, 6, 8
- 3/19 Aristotle, Ethics, VIII, ch. 1-6
- 3/21 TBA
- 3/26 Aristotle, Ethics VIII, ch. 7-10
- 3/28 Aristotle, Ethics VIII, ch. 10-end
- 4/2 Aristotle, Ethics, IX, ch. 1-7
- 4/5 Aristotle, Ethics IX, ch. 8-end
- 4/9 Catch-up and Review