



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

POLI 2510 Ancient and Medieval Political Thought
Winter 2022
Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30-4:00 pm via Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Mathie

Email: cmathie@lakeheadu.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 4:15-5:45 pm, or by appointment, via Zoom.

Course Description

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 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?

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 also greatly concerned with these 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 relationship between individual and political community in both the *City of God* and *On Kingship*. In this course, we will engage directly with the questions that all of these thinkers posed and the answers that each offered by reading, reflecting on, and discussing their books.

Obviously, the questions and ideas that you will confront in this course are not dryly theoretical; ideas about how best to live and to associate with others have shaped political history, and our own ideas about such things have practical consequences for our lives every day. We all have skin in the game! For these reasons, your study of the timeless political questions will require your direct, personal engagement, and our classes will proceed as much as possible through discussion. In order to engage well in class discussions, you 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.

Course Requirements

Required Texts:

You must have copies of the 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.

Plato *Republic* Basic Books ISBN-13: 978-0465069347

Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (University of Chicago) ISBN-13: 978-0226026756

Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship: to the King of Cyprus*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies ISBN-13: 978-0888442512

Reading packages (to be posted on d2l):

Selections from Livy, *History of Rome* and Augustine, *City of God*.

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 the end of the night 5 pm on Monday January 31, and at 5 pm on Monday March 7 (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 March 20, 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. 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.
- 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 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.

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 is an imperfect forum for discussion, 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.

Jan	11	Course outline/introduction
Jan	13	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , up to 336b in Book I
Jan	18	<i>Republic</i> , remainder of Book I
Jan	20	<i>Republic</i> , Book II
Jan	25	<i>Republic</i> , Book III, starting at 398b.
Jan	27	<i>Republic</i> , Book IV
Feb	1	<i>Republic</i> , Book V
Feb	3	<i>Republic</i> , Book VI
Feb	8	<i>Republic</i> , Book VII (to 520b)
Feb	10	<i>Republic</i> , Book VIII
Feb	15	<i>Republic</i> , Book IX
Feb	17	Midterm
Feb	22-24	READING WEEK – No Class
Mar	1	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I

Mar	3	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II, Ch. 1, 3, 5-9; Book III, Ch. 6-12
Mar	8	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IV, Ch. 1-4, 9
Mar	10	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book V, Ch. 1-5, 7, 9-11
Mar	15	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VI, Ch. 1-2, 5, 12-13; Book VII
Mar	17	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VIII
Mar	22	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IX
Mar	24	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book X
Mar	29	Selections from Livy, <i>History of Rome</i> and Augustine, <i>City of God</i> (available on d2l)
Mar	31	Thomas Aquinas, <i>On Kingship</i> , “To the King of Cyprus,” Book I, Chapters 1-6
Apr	5	<i>On Kingship</i> , Book I, Chapters 7-12; Book II, Chapters 1-4
Apr	7	<i>On Kingship</i> , Book II, Chapters 5-8; <i>Summa Theologiae</i> Ia-IIae Q. 105, A. 1 (available on d2l)