

Course Number: POLI 2510 WA
Instructor: Dr. Jason P. Blahuta
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Winter 2019

Class Location: BB 1054
Class Time: MW 11:30-13:00
Office: RB 3009
Office Hours: by appointment only
Phone: 343-8937

Course Outline for Ancient and Medieval Political Thought, Lakehead University

Course Goals: Aside from providing an insight into the history of the West, ancient and medieval political thought allows us to better understand contemporary political issues, as many of our current social and political challenges as well as our political institutions are rooted in the ideas of these earlier thinkers.

This course seeks to provide a significantly detailed introduction to a range of major political theorists from the Classical era. Most prominently figured are Plato and Aristotle, however many other philosophers and thinkers from a range of backgrounds contributed to the political discourse in ancient Greece, Rome, and throughout the medieval period leading up to the Renaissance. A (far from exhaustive) selection of these thinkers and their writings will be examined. No attention is given to other traditions, but the student should be aware that there are other traditions of thought that include robust political philosophies, and there are other courses devoted to them.

Learner Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- ☐ Conceptually unpack and critically evaluate specific terms used in arguments
- ☐ Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of ancient Greek, Roman, and Medieval philosophy for its own sake, as well as for the influence these thinkers have had on later political thought
- ☐ To explore the relevance of the ideas these thinkers discussed to the contemporary world
- ☐ To formulate defenses and criticisms of these issues in accord with the rules of formal and informal logic, and to articulate and defend a position on these issues in essay format, both formal and on the final exam, in harmony with the student's own intellectual development
- ☐ Show improvement in their existing philosophical skills of interpretation, analysis, critical reflection; and in the case of beginners, to demonstrate an acquisition of these skills

Teaching Philosophy: The professor will act as a guide along the path of the philosophical issues dealt with in this course. No particular tradition or philosophical position will be advocated by the professor. Students will have the opportunity and the freedom to develop their own position vis-à-vis the philosophies dealt with in the course. The professor will alternate between learning guide and devil's advocate for the purpose of challenging students to develop their positions further in light of constructive criticisms and traditional objections. As philosophy is a process that occurs not just between professor and student, but between student and student, it is important to remember that *showing respect for the views and personages of others is a part of the learning process*—disagreeing with someone is fine (and even encouraged), but it must be done through arguments, not personal attacks, and with the professionalism and composure that is appropriate to a scholarly discussion. **Note: opinions are worthless in this course. If you want to say or believe something (openly in class or on an assignment), you must present an argument for it.**

Methodology: Philosophy began as a dialogue, and this class will be conducted in that spirit. Crucial to this dialogue is that students read the material before class. Even if the material seems dense and incomprehensible, a basic familiarity with the readings will help facilitate both class discussion and the learning process.

A class web site will also be available, providing students with current updates on the course's progress, information about additional readings, and links to relevant information on the internet. Course notes will generally *not be* posted on the web, although some exceptions to this rule may occur. Students are expected to check the web site for messages, etc. before each class. As much as possible, the methodology is designed to promote active-learning on the part of the student.

My most positive experiences as a student were of easy access to my professors, and this is a quality that I try to bring to all my courses. Students are encouraged to visit me during scheduled office hours, or contact me by e-mail either to arrange an appointment that will work with both our schedules or to resolve any questions or concerns they have through e-mail correspondence. *Please do not contact me by phone* as the phones in the Ryan building have experienced a variety of problems over the summer, and I cannot guarantee their reliability.

The most effective way to learn something is to do it. Thus, as much as class constraints permit, active-learning strategies will be employed. This may take the form of in class assignments, games, debates, and small group activities.

Course Requirements and Methodology: This course has five mandatory components. Three tests of a multiple choice format worth fifteen percent each, a major essay worth twenty-five percent, and a cumulative take-home final exam worth thirty percent. The format of the take home exam will be three essays. Specific parameters for the essay as will be made available on the course website. The purpose of the tests is to offer students a quick gauge of how deep their reading of the texts is.

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Test for Module 1:	Jan. 30	15%
Test for Module 2:	Feb. 27	15%
Test for Module 3:	Mar. 20	15%
Major Essay:	Mar. 25, 11:30 in dropbox on website	25%
Final Take-Home Exam (cumulative):	Due Apr. 8, 16:00 in RB 3009	30%

Late Penalties, Extensions, and Submission of Assignments: A late penalty of 3 marks per day will apply to all assignments, but will be waived for legitimate reasons, providing that supporting documentation is provided (e.g., doctor's note). If students anticipate being late with an assignment due to personal circumstances that cannot be documented, they should approach the professor in advance (e.g., with *reasonable* notice) and ask for an extension. If this is not done, late penalties will apply no matter how heart wrenching the circumstances may be. Students who hand in assignments late should have their assignments signed and dated by the secretary. Late assignments that are not notarized in this way will be considered as handed in whenever the professor receives them (e.g., if an assignment is handed in on Wednesday, but I do not check my mailbox until Monday, the assignment will be treated as being submitted on Monday and the corresponding late penalty will apply). *Do not* slip assignments under my office door. Many papers become lost this way, and if this occurs, the essay will be considered as *not* submitted. Students are also required to keep a personal copy of all essays submitted for this course. Should an assignment go "missing" and the student is unable to produce another copy of it by the next class, the assignment will be considered *not* submitted. Students are also responsible for hanging onto all marked assignments. Should a discrepancy arise between a recorded grade and what a student recalls receiving on the assignment, the student will need to produce the marked assignment.

Return of Assignments: University policy requires that assignments totaling 25% of a student's final grade be made available to the student by the drop date, however, ***it is the responsibility of the student to retrieve marked assignments.*** Assignments submitted through the course

website can be retrieved from the website after they have been marked. Assignments submitted in hard copy format will be distributed in the first class after they have been marked, after that class, students will have to make an appointment with me to obtain their unclaimed assignment. In cases where class presentations or participation are included, students looking should contact the professor prior to the drop date for a report on their progress.

Texts: All readings can be found on the course website, except for excerpts from those listed below. Free versions of these texts are available on the Internet, and various editions can be purchased from traditional bookstores, used bookstores, or online retailers.

Required: Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics* (any edition is acceptable)
 Aristotle – *Politics* (any edition is acceptable)
 Plato – *The Republic* (any edition is acceptable)

Academic Policies: There are numerous university policies covering attendance, course withdrawal, appeal of grades, plagiarism and other forms academic misconduct, etc. Students are advised to consult the university calendar regarding these and all other policies, as all situations will be dealt with according to university policy.

University Services: Lakehead University offers a variety of services to help students with their academic endeavors as well as with life in general. Students are encouraged to consult the University website to familiarize themselves with these resources and use them if they can be beneficial. Students are also encouraged to think critically about these services and whether or not these services are appropriate for their situation, and not blindly accept the word of any university employee, counselor, or medical personnel as correct, complete, or beyond question.

Thomas R. Klassen and John A. Dwyer of York University have also published a useful book, *How to Succeed at University (and Get a Great Job!): Mastering the Critical Skills You Need for School, Work, and Life from UBC Press*. Students who are feeling overwhelmed by their choices, or are trying to find their way amidst conflicting advice and pressures from advisors, parents, friends, etc., may want to read this book.

Caveat: While every attempt has been made to organize this course in accordance with university policy, some errors may exist. In such event, the error will be resolved according to the relevant university policies. In the case of due dates, should a due date fall within a period in which assignments cannot be due, the due date will be rescheduled for the first eligible day *preceding* the original date.

Warning: Philosophy often deals with controversial subjects and examines them from a variety of perspectives. Individuals may find some of these perspectives distasteful or offensive, however you are adults, and part of the university experience (and a key element of philosophy) is being exposed to new ideas and viewpoints which you do not agree with. If you cannot deal with such controversy in a mature and acceptable manner, viz. through critical evaluation and a reasoned response, you should save yourself, your classmates, and me time and aggravation and withdraw from this course immediately.

Ancient and Medieval Political Thought—Topics and Readings:

Module 1: The Presocratics and Socrates

Week 1 (Jan. 7, 9): Introduction; Presocratic Political Thought

Readings: Sophocles—*Antigone* (selections)
Herodotus—*The Histories* (selections)

Week 2 (Jan. 14, 16): Socrates I

Readings: Apology—Plato
Reflections of Socrates and Socrates' Defense to the Jury—Xenophon

Week 3 (Jan. 21, 23): Socrates II

Readings: *Crito*—Plato

Module 2: The Heirs of Socrates: Plato and Xenophon

Week 4 (Jan. 28, 30): Plato I

Readings: *The Republic*, Books I-III—Plato

Assignment: Test for Module 1 (Jan. 30)

Week 5 (Feb. 4-6): Plato II

Readings: *The Republic*, Books IV, V, VII, VIII—Plato

Week 6 (Feb. 11, 13): Xenophon

Readings: *Hiero the Tyrant*--Xenophon

Study Break Feb. 18-22

Module 3: Aristotle and the Romans

Week 7 (Feb. 25, 27): Aristotle I: The Nicomachean Ethics

Readings: *The Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, chs. 1-2, Book II, chs. 1-2, Book V, ch. 7, Book VIII, chs. 1-11—Aristotle

Assignment: Test for Module 2 (Feb. 27)

Week 8 (Mar. 4, 6): Aristotle II: The Politics

Readings: *Politics* Book I, chs. 1-6, Book III, chs. 6-13, Book IV, chs. 8-12, Book VII, chs. 1-3—Aristotle

Important Date: Fr, Mar. 8 is the last day to drop courses without academic penalty

Week 9 (Mar. 11, 13): The Romans

Readings: Polybius (selections)
On Duties (selections)—Cicero

Module 4: Medieval Political Thought

Week 10 (Mar. 18, 20): God, Humans, and Politics

Readings: *The City of God* (selections)—Augustine
Summa Theologica (selections)—Aquinas

Assignment: Test for Module 3 (Mar. 20)

Week 11 (Mar. 25, 27): Church and State

Readings: *On Monarchy*, Book III—Dante

Assignment: Major Essay due Mar. 27, 11:30

Ancient and Medieval Political Thought—Topics and Readings cont.:

Week 12 (Apr. 1, 3): Setting the Stage for the Renaissance

Readings: *City of Ladies* (selections)—Christine de Pizan
The Book of the Body Politic (selections)—Christine de Pizan
The Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry (selections)—Christine de Pizan
Oration on the Dignity of Man—Pico della Mirandola

Final Take Home Exam: Due in hardcopy format by Apr.8, 16:00 in RB 3009.

Recommended Further Reading:

- Adamson, Peter. *Classical Philosophy: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*. Vol. 1. New York: Oxford UP, 2014.
- *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford UP, 2015.
- *Philosophy in the Islamic World: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford UP, 2016.
- Annas, Julia. *Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.
- *Intelligent Virtue*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011.
- Barnes, Jonathan. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Black, Antony. *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh [UK]: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Burns, J. H. Ed. *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Canning, Joseph. *A History of Medieval Political Thought: 300–1450*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Coleman, Janet. *A History of Political Thought: From Ancient Greece to Early Christianity*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.
- *A History of Political Thought: From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.
- Desauliers, Marguerite and Pierre Destrée. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013.
- Ferrari, G.R.F. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Finnis, John. *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Flower, Michael A. *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2016.
- Freeland, Cynthia A. *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle*. University Park [PA]: Penn State University Press, 1998.
- Gillespie, Stuart and Philip Hardie. Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Greek Philosophy*. 6 Vol. New York: Cambridge UP, 1979.
- Inwood, Brad. *Stoicism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2018.
- Jacoff, Rachel. *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Kraut, Richard. *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*. New York: Oxford UP, 2002.
- *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Morrison, Donald R. *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2010.
- Polansky, Ronald. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2014.
- Schofield, Malcolm. *Plato: Political Philosophy*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Tuana, Nancy. *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*. University Park [PA]: Penn State University Press, 1994.
- Vlastos, Gregory. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Ithaca [NY]: Cornell University Press, 1991.