

Medieval and Renaissance Political Theory - Phil 344

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Office Hours TTh 10-11 and by appointment

The course meets from 8:35 AM until 9:55AM in Leacock 110.

Outline:

The course traces the evolution of political theory from the late Roman Empire (roughly 400 CE) until the 16th century and with any luck at all by the end of the course those enrolled will have some understanding of that evolution and some understanding of the background of some important current political debates. Our focus will be on the development of the concepts of *dominium* (sovereignty/ownership/mastery) and *ius* (right) and their role in the development and justification of current conceptions of the state. We will concentrate on Western Europe but also look at developments within political theory within the area where Islam was dominant. None of this has yet been explored as deeply as one might hope.

The course will begin with a (too) quick orientation in the political theories that emerged from the Greek city states, the very concept of the political, and the situation at the end of the Western Roman Empire as Christianity replaced the Greco-Roman pantheon as official religion of the Empire and the power of the Church began to eclipse that of the Empire.

After some examination of the parallel developments of the theory of the Caliphate/ Imamate and the theory of the Emperor as both temporal and spiritual leader we will turn to the development of notions of *dominium* and *ius* in Western Europe. Here Political Philosophy and Law overlap and we will look (briefly) at developments in law connected with our central themes.

A central episode in the development of the concepts of dominion and right was the debate within the Latin Christian church over whether moral perfection was compatible with ownership of property. Many who followed Francis of Assisi thought not and attempted to work out a theory of how one could live without legal rights to anything. In the resulting debate were forged our current conceptions of natural right, political right and property.

We will turn finally to issues raised by the European discovery of the Americas. This forced serious consideration of issues of imperialism, treatment of peoples over whom one has considerable power, and citizenship, in ways which had not been part of the medieval experience and which to a large extent are still with us. We will examine in some detail two central works of 'Renaissance' political philosophy, Machiavelli's *Prince* and Thomas More's *Utopia* and will consider the beginnings of International Law

Assessment:

Those taking the course for a grade will be expected to write five very short reports on some of the reading (20%), to write one small (1500-2000) word (20%) and one longer (2500-3500) word (30%) paper, and to write one take-home exam (30%)

during term. All of the assignments should be submitted electronically and text-matching software may be used on any of them.

Readings

Those taking the course for credit are strongly urged to buy the following books which will be available from The Word bookstore on Milton. Other readings both required and recommended will be made available on the course website.

Joseph McFarland and Joshua Parens . : Medieval Political Philosophy (2nd edition) Agora Editions, Cornell University Press 2011 (paperback edition)

Machiavelli: *The Prince*
tr. David Wootton Hackett Publishing 1995

More, Thomas *Utopia*
tr. Robert M. Adams, ed. George Logan
revised edition, Cambridge U.P. 2002

De las Casas, Bartoleme: *In Defense of the Indians*
tr. Stafford Poole, Northern Illinois University Press 1992

Very Very Very Tentative lecture Plan (likely to undergo some revision as the course proceeds even if there are no pandemics or wars)

Lecture 1 (Sept. 1) Introduction to the course and to Hellenic/istic political thought

Lecture 2 (Sept. 6) Roman political theory of the Republic and the Empire.

Lecture 3 (Sept. 8) Augustine on government: Church and Empire

Lecture 4 (Sept. 13) Introduction to Roman law of dominium

Lecture 5 (Sept. 15) Introduction to Islamic law

Lecture 6 (Sept. 20) Sovereignty and Obedience in Islamic Law

Lecture 7 (Sept. 22) falsafa, kalam, al-Farabi

Lecture 8 (Sept. 27) al-Farabi

Lecture 9 (Sept. 29) al-Ghazali on law and government

Lecture 10 (Oct. 4) - Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy the Son of Yaqzan*

Lecture 11 (Oct. 6) John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*

Lecture 12 (Oct. 11) Aquinas, Peter of Auvergne and Aristotle's *Politics*

Lecture 13 (Oct. 13) Aquinas on Law

Lecture 14 (Oct. 18) The Beginnings of the Poverty Controversy

Lecture 15 (Oct. 20) Scotus on law, politics, and property

Lecture 16 (Oct. 25) John XXII and Ockham on natural rights

Lecture 17 (Oct. 27) Wyclif, dominium, and revolution

Lecture 18 (Nov. 1) The Empire, the Papacy and the Italian cities

Lecture 19 (Nov. 3) Machiavelli *The Prince* I

Lecture 20 (Nov. 8) Machiavelli *the Prince II*

Lecture 21 (Nov. 10) Thomas More and *Utopia* I

Lecture 22 (Nov. 15) More and *Utopia* II

- Lecture 23 (Nov. 17) The Salamanca Junta
 Lecture 24 (Nov.22) De las Casas and the Case of the Indies
 Lecture 25 (Nov. 24) Hugo Grotius and the Beginning Of International Law
 Lecture 26 (Nov.29) Grotius and the Law of the Sea
 Lecture 27 (Dec. 1) A look back

The University has asked me to remind those planning on enrolling that:

1. ***"McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).***
2. ***"In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded."***

And also that:

- *"If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) at 514-398-6009 before you do this."*
- *. I have no problem with audio or video recording in class. Use of mobile phones to make or receive calls during class is, however (of course) a no-no!*
- *"End-of-course [evaluations](#) are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students."*
- *"McGill has policies on sustainability, paper use and other initiatives to promote a culture of sustainability at McGill." (See the [Office of Sustainability](#).)*
- ***"In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change."*** {The worry seems to be pandemics, world wars and such!}
- *"Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights" (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available at <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Handbook-on-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-2010.pdf>).*