1. Aims and Learning Objectives:
This is a course in the history of western political and social thought (mainly) from the fall of the Western Roman Empire through the Renaissance. This era is marked by intellectual and political struggles among the legacies of the ancient world: Christianity, especially that papal Catholicism that succeeds the western Empire; the Empire and the pre-imperial Republic as aspirational models for political organization; the rediscovered Roman law; and rediscovered Greek philosophy. It is also marked by the radically changed, and sometimes rapidly changing, social and political contexts in which those ancient legacies operate. The most prominent themes often include the relationship between religion and politics: conflicts between the Catholic Church and worldly kingdoms or the Holy Roman Empire, or the relationship between acting as a good Christian and acting as a good citizen.

The majority of our reading time will be devoted to the major canonical figures Augustine, Aquinas, and Machiavelli, but we will read several authors in some depth and some quickly to illustrate intellectual trends of one era or another. Historical background will routinely be offered in lecture.

The aims of the course include:
1) To continue the training in the history of western political thought begun in POLI 333, and to prepare students for Political Science 433, the early modern course that follows it in sequence;
2) To offer substantive knowledge about the themes mentioned above, about a selection of the most important thinkers in the history of western political philosophy and social thought, and about the intellectual, political, economic, and social history of the medieval era;
3) To offer students the opportunity to learn to interpret and understand theoretical and philosophical texts about politics, and to adjudicate among rival understandings or interpretations of those texts;
4) To offer students the ability to critically evaluate those texts, both with respect to the quality of their arguments and with respect to their normative or explanatory claims;
5) To offer students the ability to improve their own ability to make normative and explanatory arguments about politics and society;
6) To improve students’ skills at communicating such arguments in discussion and in written work.

2. Prerequisites:
Normally students will have taken POLI 333 or PHIL 345, or be taking one of them simultaneously as a corequisite. 500-level or above courses in political theory or philosophy will be accepted in lieu of this prerequisite. Students who have taken some other course offering sustained exposure to Plato’s and Aristotle’s political writings should e-mail the instructor with
detailed. You will be expected to be able to recognize major ideas from Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics* without much prompting.

3. **Texts:**
The following works are available for purchase at Paragraphe Bookstore:

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Penguin Classics
- Francisco Vitoria, *Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press

A number of other readings are online in MyCourses. Most readings are also available in the Ferrier library, on an informal reserve basis; please read them there rather than taking them away.

4. **Class format and grading**

Three papers, each of 2500 words ± 10%, will each make up 30% of the grade. Late papers will be penalized at ²⁄₃ of a grade per day—that is, an A paper becomes a B+ paper when it is up to 24 hours late, a B- paper when it is 24-48 hours late. Papers are due at 5 pm; submission should be both by e-mail and by hard copy. I will treat the e-mail timestamp as the time of submission, but the hard copy should arrive soon thereafter, and no later than **five minutes before** the beginning of class the next morning. The electronic and hard copies must be identical. **If the e-mailed paper and the hard copy paper are not identical, this will be treated as a violation of the academic integrity rules and charges will be filed; the system only works if people can be trusted not to keep revising their paper after the timestamp. I randomly check and compare.**

Required papers are due **DATES**.

**Tentative, depending on enrollment totals**-- this will be true if enrollment falls dramatically (<35), or if it stays high enough to provide a grading assistant (>65), but not in between. Students may write a fourth paper, due **DATE** if they do, the lowest grade of their four papers will be dropped provided that it was a passing grade. (You thus may not skip one of the three required papers and make it up with this one.) The calculation of which paper has the lowest grade excludes late penalties, so if your paper grades are

A; A- before late penalty, C+ because it was 2 days late; B
and you write the optional paper, it is the B that will be dropped, not the C+.

**This is a manual note-taking class.** When the day’s readings are available in hard copy, laptops and tablets are not permitted. When the day’s readings are only available electronically, electronic devise may be used for the purpose of consulting the texts. Exceptions to this policy may be
granted on specific request with justifiable reasons, but a) if you have been granted an exception and you are using a laptop to take notes, please sit at the back of the class, and b) such exceptions are only meant to apply for note-taking, and may be revoked if it’s discovered that computers are being used for other purposes during class.

The remaining 10% of the class is graded on the basis of discussion. In a class of this size we may well not be able to have everyone speak in in class discussions, and we certainly won’t be able to have a sustained conversation that involves everyone. Accordingly the participation grade will combine:

A) **Generating questions.** In weeks when there is a discussion class on Thursday, everyone is expected, by midnight on Tuesday, to e-mail a proposed question for discussion to me at jacobtlevy@gmail.com. The questions for the discussion will be substantially (though not completely) drawn from these. By 3 pm on Wednesday, I will post on MyCourses some of the questions that I’ll be using from those that were proposed.

B) **Responses to cold-calling about those questions.** Discussion of each of the questions will begin with my calling on people randomly to offer argued, well-reasoned responses. You’re expected to be present, and to have something substantial to say, with textual references if appropriate. Not everyone will be cold-called upon over the course of the semester, but if you are, the result will figure heavily into your participation grade.

C) **Further in-class discussion** after those initial responses; we’ll do the best we can given the class size.

D) **Additional discussion on MyCourses.** As a supplement to in-class discussions, I’ll both post particular questions and open general threads about authors, texts, and themes we don’t have a chance to cover in the in-class discussions. If you happen not to ever get cold-called on or called on for in-class discussions, you should make particularly sure to take part in at least some of these.

This class is graded on a 4.0 scale not a 100-point scale, as per [https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2010-2011/university-regulations-and-information/gi_grading_and_grade_point_averages](https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2010-2011/university-regulations-and-information/gi_grading_and_grade_point_averages)

5. McGill Statement on Academic Integrity: 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 [http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/)).
6. **Language.** Students in this course have the right to submit any written work that is to be graded in either English or French. This includes the short response essays. Lectures and discussion will be in English. I know that in some courses there are fairness concerns about who grades French written work; I grade all the work in this class myself, in French or English.

7. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

8. **Miscellany.** While I am bureaucratically required to put item 7 on the syllabus, I am not bureaucratically forbidden to make fun of it. So, on the one hand: if a highly contagious disease epidemic breaks out, we will meet in person less frequently and less mandatorily. This was the worry that first prompted the addition of that language to syllabi, and the fact that it needed to be said demonstrates how foolishly bureaucratized and legalistic the interpretation of the *Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities*, ch. 1, Articles 10-11 (http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/academicrights/course) has become over the years thanks to challenges to any change made in the syllabus after the second week. It should also be noted that if an earthquake destroys the building in which our classroom is located, we may change classrooms, and that shall not be interpreted as a breach of contract; and if the End of Days arrives before the end of the semester, it is possible that final grades will be delayed. On the other hand, you have my commitment that I will not invoke #7 unless health, safety, or physical necessity demand it. Strikes, protests, and boycotts, for example, will not alter either my or your responsibilities to the class; no classes will be canceled, no deadlines delayed, etc.

In a class such as this one, with unfamiliar history and names showing up quite often, wikipedia is a valuable resource, *if used selectively*. It’s unreliable as a guide to ideas; don’t look up “Aquinas” and think you’re going to learn anything you can count on about his philosophy. But it’s usually very reliable about dates, institutions, political and social changes, and so on, especially if what you need are basic facts and orientations. An even better resource is the Internet Medieval Sourcebook at [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html), That has chronologies, maps, primary texts, and more, and I highly recommend it. An additional resource I recommend is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [http://plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu). Its entries are particularly useful to those who might need some refreshing on the prerequisite material (again, Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Ethics* and/or *Politics*.)

You may be assured that I have read the relevant Stanford Encyclopedia entries and will recognize any prose copied and pasted from them into papers. Papers in this class do not require secondary readings to complete, but they are allowed, **provided that full and complete citations and attributions are given.** Unattributed copying and pasting is plagiarism. I angrily pursue plagiarism cases to the fullest extent.
9. Syllabus of readings and sessions

January 5: **No class.** Catch-up reading for people who need it. You should be familiar with Plato’s myth of the cave and doctrine of the forms; with Aristotle’s idea of humans as being naturally political; and with Aristotle’s use of teleology. This may mean refreshing your acquaintance with sections of Plato’s *Republic* of Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* as needed.

January 10:
**Online:**
Cicero, *On Duties* (44 BCE); *On the Laws* (c. 44 BCE); *On the Republic* (c. 51 BCE)
Seneca, “On Leisure” (62 CE)
Justinian, *Institutes* (533 CE)

January 12:
**Online:**
Nicene Creed

January 17: Augustine, *Political Writings*, pp. 1-57
January 19: Augustine, *Political Writings*, pp. 58-129 **Discussion**
January 24: Augustine, *Political Writings*, pp. 130-201
January 26: Augustine, *Political Writings*, pp. 202-256 **Discussion**

January 31: Online:
Magna Carta, 1215
Authentica Habita, 1158
Customs of Saint-Omer c. 1100
Customs of Lorris c. 1155
Statutes of Volterra, 1244
Bernard of Clairvaux, “Letter to Pope Eugenius III,” c. 1146
**Short reading; get a head start on Pollicraticus for next time**

Feb 2:
**Online:**
John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 1159, pp. 9-78, 81-109, 129-143, 190-210

February 7: Aquinas, *Political Writings*, pp. 1-75
February 9: Aquinas, *Political Writings*, pp. 76-157 **discussion**
February 14: Aquinas, *Political Writings*, pp. 158-219
February 16: Aquinas, *Political Writings*, pp. 220-278 **Discussion**

February 21:
**Online:**
Giles of Rome, *On Civil Government*, c. 1280
Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, 1302

February 23:
Online:
William of Ockham, “Whether a Ruler Can Accept The Property of Churches For His Own Needs…”, 1337
John Wyclif, *On the Duty of the King*, 1379
Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, c. 1407
Bartolus, *On the Conflict of Laws* (1471)

**Reading break**

March 7

March 9
Dante, *Monarchy*. **Discussion**
**No new reading for today, but the reading for next week is long; get a head start.**

March 14:
Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace*, (1324), pp. 3-136
Note that you must be on campus to do this, or else use a VPN or proxy.

March 16

March 21

March 23
331-33, letter to de Arcos, 1534

March 28
Machiavelli, letter to Vettori in *The Prince*
Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Books I-II (**Be forewarned: more reading than usual. But the reading for the rest of the semester is light.**)

March 30
Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Book III. **Discussion**

April 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
April 6: Machiavelli, *The Prince*. **Discussion**
April 11: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, and conclusion

1. You must seriously consider serious objections to your argument. For example, if you are criticizing an author, you must construct and respond to a strong defense of the author, and if you are defending, you must construct and respond to a strong criticism. Attacking straw men is bad, and a complete lack of attention to possible counterarguments is worse. If you cannot imagine serious counterarguments to your thesis, then your thesis is probably trivial (or your imagination is too constrained). **Do not underestimate the importance of this. A paper that considers no counterarguments or only very brief and weak ones is not a persuasive or successful paper. In my classes, such a paper will typically end up with a C-range grade or worse.**

2. Meeting #1 requires taking a clear position on the question you are addressing. "This paper will explore the issues related to" is not a thesis (and, obviously, doesn't allow for any interesting counterargument).

3. Most of what they taught you in secondary school composition (if your school had such a course) remains true. Outlining before you start writing is useful. A thesis paragraph at the beginning of the paper, thesis statements at the beginnings of many paragraphs, and periodic signposts about what has been proven so far and what remains to be proven, help keep a paper clear. It is true that overdoing this kind of thing can make essays seem mechanical and unlovely; but it is better to err on the side of a clear unloveliness than to err on the side of stylistic confusion. As with grammatical rules, you should know the rules of composition and be able to use them easily before you decide that their violation is warranted in this or that case for stylistic reasons. So, for example, one sometimes has good reason to use the passive voice. Unless one understands the problems with the passive voice, however, one can't distinguish the rare appropriate uses from the many sloppy ones.

4. Logic counts.

5. Spelling counts. Running a spell-check is the beginning, not the end, of finding spelling errors.

6. Grammar and correct usage count. Using the grammar-check in Microsoft Word is **not** recommended as a method of finding grammatical errors. Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, and Shertzer's *The Elements of Grammar* are much more reliable guides. If you own none of these, you should invest in one or more as soon as possible. (I recommend Fowler.)

7. Style counts, but see #3.

8. A metaphor is not an argument. A list is not an argument. Even an analogy, by itself, is not an argument.

9. One argument can refute, undermine, or override another. Refutation: "This is wrong. The evidence otherwise, the causality runs the other way, there is no logical link here..." Undermining: "This may be correct, but look where else it gets us in the long term, or what other consequences the argument has that proponents didn't notice, or what obviously ridiculous cases the argument actually has to cover on its own terms, or..." Overriding: "This may be correct, but this other issue is more important, because it is more urgent, because there is some logical or moral ranking of principles, because justice is more important than utility..." If your argument...

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1 I grant permission to anyone who wishes to circulate these guidelines or use them in their own teaching, but ask to be acknowledged as their author.
overrides another, you normally have to give reasons why x is more important than y, not simply
assert it.

10. Beware of introductions and conclusions, especially in short papers. A lengthy introduction
discussing how important a question is and how many great thinkers have thought about it for
how many centuries is a waste of space, and space is your most precious resource. Cut to the
chase; offer your thesis and outline your argument. Conclusions should not include surprises; they
should clearly state the conclusions that have already unfolded through the course of the
argument. Unsupported speculations about other related questions, or unargued-for controversial
claims about the wider significance of what you have established, can only weaken the force of
the arguments you have made.

11. Statements such as "I think X," "I believe X," and (worst of all) "I feel X" are
autobiographical. They tell the reader something about you; they tell the reader nothing about
claim X. Sometimes—rarely—there is a call for such constructions, but don't use them when
you really mean to be arguing in support of X. These certainly cannot be theses, which you can
tell because the only possible objections would come from a mind-reader or psychologist showing
that you don't think, believe, or feel X.

12. Beware of what the old T.V. show “Yes, Minister” jokingly referred to as irregular verbs: “I
give confidential security briefings. You leak. He has been charged under section 2a of the
Official Secrets Act” or “I have an independent mind, you are eccentric, he is around the twist.”
Compare Hobbes: “There be other names of government in the histories and books of policy; as
tyranny and oligarchy; but they are not the names of other forms of government, but of the same
forms disliked. For they that are discontented under monarchy call it tyranny; and they that are
displeased with aristocracy call it oligarchy: so also, they which find themselves grieved under a
democracy call it anarchy…”

Irregularities you might commit: “I believe in freedom, you believe in license, he believes in
anarchy.” “I belong to a denomination, you belong to a sect, he belongs to a cult.” “I have
principles; you have an ideology; he is a fanatic.” “I believe in appropriate regulation; you are an
authoritarian; he is a fascist.” “I am a philosopher; you are a casuist; he is a sophist.” In each
case there are legitimate distinctions to be drawn; but there is also a temptation to score rhetorical
points by simply renaming the phenomenon depending on whether it is liked or disliked. If you
draw these distinctions, you should be able to defend them. It is not an argument simply to give
what you like a nice name and what you don’t like a rude one.

13. I wish this went without saying, but: no emoticons, no internet or chat-based shorthand, and
no vulgarity. Vulgar words may of course be quoted in appropriate contexts, such as a paper
about censorship. The rule against them does not apply to religious words used in their strict
sense, e.g. damn and hell (and, of relevance to students from Quebec, tabernacle and chalice.)
“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

Inigo Montoya

This is a list of some common mistakes, but is by no means complete. Buy and use a style guide such as Fowler's for more complete guidance. Examples and explanations are short and sometimes incomplete; when they conflict with fuller accounts in a style guide or dictionary, rely on the latter.

You will be held fully responsible for errors on these points. Using “disinterested” for “uninterested” will have an effect on your grade.

Some of these are subtle points but many are not, and they are important not only for this class but also for your ability to come across as a literate and competent user of English. Writing “would of” instead of “would have,” or mixing up “its” and “it’s” or “loose” and “lose,” is sloppy and leaves an unprofessional, childish impression.

Observe the following distinctions.

CATEGORY 1: RULES. Violations of these are simply mistakes. Even in casual writing, you should maintain these distinctions; otherwise, you’re just using the wrong word.

disinterested/ uninterested. disinterested means impartial; someone who doesn't care is uninterested.

its/ it's its means belongs to it; it's is short for it is

affect/ effect A affects B; A effected a change in B; C is the cause, D is the effect; a prisoner turns over personal effects; he affects a cane, pocket watch, and bowtie in order to appear eccentric. Unless you’re quite sure of this distinction, stick to using affect as a verb and effect as a noun.

imply/ infer The author implies, the data imply; the reader or the researcher inferences.

refute/ deny/ disagree refute requires logical success; it is a disproof of the other position, not a mere assertion that it is wrong. Monty Python’s Argument Clinic (“This isn’t an argument.” “Yes it is!” “No it isn’t, it’s just contradictions!” “No it isn’t!”) offers only denials, not refutations. When you say that A refutes B, you must be prepared to show why and how A’s denials of or disagreements with B’s view are successful.

lay/ lie lay is a transitive verb; it requires an object. I lay the book down; I went to lie down on the bed. The Christian prayer goes “Now I lay me down to sleep,” not “now I lay down to sleep;” “me” (or in normal speech “myself”) is the object, and is necessary.

less/ fewer fewer for discrete objects you can count, less for general amount. Less reading, but fewer pages of reading. We need less labor; we need fewer workers.

of/ have would have, should have, could have, must have; not would of, could of, should of, must of

populace/ populous Populace is a noun; the population, the people. Populous is an adjective.

discreet/ discrete discrete means noncontinuous or individuated, not subtle or quiet or private.
**everyday/ every day** When you mean "routine" or "normal," it's everyday, one word. “Every day on the island, the characters on *Lost* experience something unknown to the everyday world.”

**principle/ principal** Principle is the noun that means a rule, a norm, a goal. Principal is the adjective meaning primary, or the noun that refers to a primary actor, the first officer of our university, or the director of an agent.

**precedent/ president** According to the precedent set in Clinton vs. Jones, a President may be sued while in office.

**dissent/ descent** Hobbes worries that too much dissent might begin a society's descent into civil war.

**ensure/ insure** Ordinarily one insure against a bad outcome, e.g. by buying insurance. One aims to ensure (that is, bring about or guarantee) a good outcome. Hobbes does not try to insure peace.

**lose/ loose** To loose something is to release it from some kind of restraint, to let it go. Loose as a verb isn't an everyday construction; it can always be replaced by release or let loose. If the sentence doesn't work with such a replacement, then you mean lose, the opposite of gain or find. I lose my freedom, my glasses, or my job; I have the most to lose.

**ambiguous/ ambivalent** Ambiguous refers to a problem of interpretation; I don’t know what a text means because it’s ambiguous on an important point. Ambivalent is the attitude of being divided between two options. It may be that a text is ambiguous on a question because the author was ambivalent about the correct answer; or it may just be that the author expressed himself or herself unclearly. Your facial expression might be ambiguous; I, as an observer, don’t know how to interpret it; that might be because your inner state of mind is ambivalent, or might be because you’re very good at concealing what are actually very strong thoughts and feelings on your part.

**tenant/ tenet** Unrelated. A tenant inhabits a house or a piece of land. A tenet is a belief or a principle. A philosopher, or any other landlord, who held his or her tenants firmly would be guilty of assault.

**imminent/ immanent/ eminent** Eminent means well-known, distinguished. Imminent means soon. Immanent is a specialized word meaning inherent or internal; if you’re not absolutely sure that it’s the one you mean, it’s probably not. Its most common use for our purposes is in the phrase immanent critique, a critique that takes place within the boundaries or assumptions of the existing argument. An immanent critique does not challenge the foundations of an argument, but tries to show that those foundations really lead to different conclusions.

**which/ that** which for clauses that aren't necessary to identify the object, usually set off by commas; that for clauses that are necessary to specify the one being talked about.

**who/ whom/ that** Avoid that when the antecedent is a person. Who is to whom as I is to me. To whom should I give the ball? Give the ball to me. Who wrote the paper?

**may/ might** When speaking about a present or future action, might expresses some doubt, while may is agnostic about likelihood. When speaking about past actions, only might have is correct for counterfactuals, things that could have happened but didn't. "If Japan had won the battle of Midway, it might have won the war."
**may/ can** can refers to possibility, **may** to permission

**comma/ semi-colon/ colon** Semi-colons separate full independent clauses in the same sentence, or items in a list that contain commas within them. A colon precedes a list, or separates two independent clauses in the same sentence when the second is a restatement or an amplification of the first. Commas set off most phrases and dependent clauses, and separate the items in a list except when the items themselves contain commas.

**To beg the question** is **to assume the conclusion.** It is *not* merely “to invite the follow-up question” or “suggest the next question.” “I win the argument because I’m right” begs the question; if we already knew that you were right, then who won the argument wouldn’t be under dispute. *If you don’t understand the difference between assuming the conclusion and inviting a follow-up question, you’re probably misusing “to beg the question” and you should avoid the phrase.*

The phrase is "**all intents and purposes,**" not "**all intensive purposes.**"

Many **–ism** nouns for ideas and ideologies have **–ist** counterparts for the people who hold them or for their manifestations in the world, or as their adjectival forms: communism/ communist, socialism/ socialist, monarchism/ monarchist, fascism/ fascist, capitalism/ capitalist, absolutism/ absolutist, anarchism/ anarchist, nationalism/ nationalist, multiculturalism/ multiculturalist, consequentialism/ consequentialist, syndicalism/ syndicalist, humanism/ humanist. But this is not true for all **–ism** words: liberalism/ liberal, conservativism/ conservative, libertarianism/ libertarian, Naziism/ Nazi, whiggism/ whig, republicanism/ republican, progressivism/ progressive, communitarianism/ communitarian, utilitarianism/ utilitarian, radicalism/ radical. In general, if you drop **–ism** from the word and you’re left with a complete word you could use to denote a person holding the beliefs (liberal, conservative, progressive, but not social, capital, monarch, human), then that’s where you stop; don’t add **–ist** onto that complete word. If you’re not left with such a complete adjective, add **–ist** to get the adjective, or the noun of a person who holds the beliefs. There’s no such thing as a liberalist.

Relatedly: many such words are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not. They are proper nouns and adjectives when they refer specifically to a political party, otherwise not (which means, in political theory papers, most often not). To be a Liberal is to be a member of a Liberal Party; to be a liberal is to hold liberal beliefs (and these only sometimes overlap). Likewise for, **e.g.,** Communist and communist. (*Nazi* is a special case; it is almost always a proper noun or adjective.)

**CATEGORY 2: CONTROVERSIAL RULES, OR STRONG GUIDELINES.** In all these cases I think the distinction is worth making, and that the rule I describe is the right one. In formal writing you’ll almost always be better off maintaining these distinctions. But in some cases ordinary usage has come to vary quite widely from the traditional rule; in others there’s disagreement about whether there is such a rule; and in others the rule is maintained in formal writing but not in casual writing or in speech. I ask that you at least observe these distinctions in writing for this class, and urge you to observe them in other formal writing. In any case, I think you’re better off at least *knowing* the traditional formal rule.
if/ whether  if demands an implicit or explicit then in consequence. Whether takes an implicit or explicit or not. If your sentence or thought begins with "I wonder," [implied "then"] it should take "whether," not "if." I wonder whether [implied “or not”] there are any exceptions.

farther/ further (farther for actual physical distance, but "Nothing could be further from my thoughts."

tolerance/ toleration Usually tolerance is a personal attitude, toleration a policy, as in state toleration of religion; this is not as hard and fast a rule as the others on this list.

hopefully/ I hope that hopefully does not mean what you almost certainly think it means. "He looked up his grade hopefully," not "Hopefully, it won't rain today." Say “I hope that it won’t rain today.”

sensuous/ sensual Anything appealing to the senses, such as a painting or a piece of food, can be sensuous. Most of us most of the time don't find food sensual.

between/among between for two people or objects, among for three or more.

like/ such as Like creates a category that excludes the example you're about to mention. In this course we read books like [but not including] Rousseau’s Emile. We read books such as [and possibly including] his Social Contract.

Pay careful attention to: subjunctive verbs, noun-pronoun agreement, subject-verb agreement, correct use of apostrophes, parallel constructions

Be careful to avoid:

dangling participles: "Being unready to face the day, coffee helped." It wasn't the coffee that was unready.

prepositions after transitive verbs: "He advocated for the position that…” One advocates a position, not for a position.

incorrect prepositions: “different from” is usually the best construction. “Different to” is acceptable in informal British English; “different than” is usually incorrect.

switching verb tenses mid-thought ("Aristotle argues x; further, he said y."). This is a frequent problem in papers in political theory that draw on past thinkers.

I am not a stickler about dangling prepositions provided that they don't create a lack of clarity.

There is no rule in English against splitting an infinitive or beginning a sentence with a conjunction. In both cases, be attentive to clarity; and if you begin a sentence with a conjunction be sure that it is a complete sentence and not a fragment.

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2 “That is the sort of nonsense up with which I will not put” — attributed to Winston Churchill, commenting on the dangling preposition rule, but Churchill had a surer mastery of the language than most of us do.
When using a pronoun for a person whose gender is indeterminate, the traditional English rule is to use male pronouns—the so-called “generic ‘he’”. That is correct English and you won’t be penalized for its use, but it’s also problematic and I encourage you to move away from it. I prefer “he or she” to the singular “they,” but neither one is perfect and “he or she “ can often get cumbersome. Some writers choose to deliberately switch to a “generic ‘she.’” This is also acceptable. Lacking a perfect solution to a thorny problem in English composition, I leave you to your own devices.

The overuse of parentheses is a stylistic problem, but not one I worry about too much. The misuse of parentheses is a more serious problem. If you’ve written a sentence with a parenthetical aside in the middle of it, you should be able to subtract the whole parenthetical aside and be left with a meaningful, coherent sentence. Among other things, that means that material in parentheses cannot be the sole antecedent for a subsequent pronoun or the sole subject for a subsequent verb; and the material in the parentheses does not affect the number of a subsequent pronoun or verb.