POLI 334: Western Political Theory 2
Medieval and Renaissance Political Thought

Winter 2014, McGill University
WF 10:05-11:25 am
Burnside 1B39

Jacob T. Levy
Ferrier 416 jacobtlevy@gmail.com
Office hours W 1:30-3

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, and 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 details. 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 the McGill Bookstore:

Dante Aligheri, *Monarchy [De Monarchia],* Prue Shaw ed., Cambridge University Press.

Thomas Aquinas, *Political Writings,* Dyson, Skinner, and Geuss, eds., Cambridge University Press.

St. Augustine, *Political Writings,* Fortin, Kries, and Tkacz, eds., Hackett Publishing.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince,* Skinner and Price eds., Cambridge University Press.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy,* Penguin Classics

Cary J. Nederman and Kate Langdon Forhan, eds., *Readings in Medieval Political Theory: 1100-1400,* Hackett Publishing. [RMPT]

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**

The class will be a mix of lecture and in-class discussion. Attendance is required on the eight discussion days (almost all Fridays), which are noted in the schedule below. In addition, two discussion questions will be distributed prior to each discussion class. On at least five of those occasions, you will be expected to write a 200-250 word answer to *one* of the questions and e-mail it to me at jacobtlevy@gmail.com by 9 am on the day of class.

Three papers, each of 2500 words $\pm$ 10%, will each make up 25% of the grade. Late papers will be penalized at 2/3of 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 coy should arrive soon thereafter. The two must be identical.)

One paper is due April 11, and is required. Students will write two out of the three papers due January 30, February 20, and March 20.

Participation in discussion will make up 15% of the grade.

Each 200-250 word answer will be worth 2% of the grade. *They will not be individually graded.* You will receive 2 points each time you submit such an answer. (Bad-faith or unserious contributions will receive 0 points; you must actually submit an answer, and I do read them.)   I will use the answers as prompts for discussion, and **may call on you in discussion on the basis of your answer**. Note that it is possible to receive more than 10 points through this component; this will be extra credit.

You must pass each portion of the class to pass the class as a whole—that is, you must submit three passing-quality papers, you must receive a passing grade on participation (which itself requires regular attendance at discussion classes), and you must submit at least three responses. An F on any component will result in failing the class.

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/ 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/).

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. **Miscelleny.** 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 . 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 . 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 8
Introduction:
The 12 Tables (449 BCE) (skim)
Cicero, *On Duties* (44 BCE)*; On the Laws* (c. 44 BCE)*; On the Republic* (c. 51 BCE)
Seneca, "On Leisure," http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/colloquy/files/2012/11/seneca.pdf (62 CE)
Justinian, *Institutes* (533 CE)

January 10: Rome and Christianity
Online:
Old Testament: 1 Samuel 8:1-22
New Testament: Matthew 5-7, Romans 13:1-7, Luke 12:1-53, Matthew 22:15-22, Matthew 16:13-28
Nicene Creed

January 15: Augustine, *Political Writings,* pp. 1-57

January 17: Augustine, *Political Writings,* pp. 58-129 **Discussion**

January 22: Augustine, *Political Writings,* pp. 130-201

January 24: Augustine, *Political Writings,* pp. 202-256 **Discussion**

January 29
Online:
Magna Carta, 1215
Authentica Habita, 1158
Customs of Saint-Omer c. 1100
excerpt from Gratian, *Decretum,* c. 1150
Customs of Lorris c. 1155
Statutes of Volterra, 1244

January 30: paper due

January 31
RMPT, 21-23, 26-60, 71-96, 150-52
Bernard of Clairvaux, "Letter to Pope Eugenius III," c. 1146
John of Salisbury, excerpts from *Metalogicon* and *Policratus,* both 1159
Brunetto Latini, *The Book of Treasure,* c. 1260
Giles of Rome, "On Civil Government," c. 1280

February 5: Aquinas, *Political Writings,* pp. 1-75

February 7: Aquinas, *Political Writings,* pp. 76-157 **Discussion**

February 12: Aquinas, *Political Writings,* pp. 158-219

February 14: Aquinas, *Political Writings,* pp. 220-278 **Discussion**

February 19: Dante, *Monarchy,* c. 1313

February 20 paper due

February 21 **no class** but read:

Online: *Unam Sanctam*
RMPT, pp. 157-167, 169-72: John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power,* 1302
Dante Aligheri, *The Banquet,* c. 1304

February 26
RMPT, pp. 173-199: excerpts from Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace,* 1324
Online: additional excerpts

February 28
RMPT, 207-247
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
Online: Bartolus, *On the Conflict of Laws* (1471)

March 12
Vitoria, *Political Writings,* pp. 17-18, "On Civil Power," 1528
pp. 231-92: "On the American Indians," 1539

March 14
Vitoria, *Political Writings,* pp. 205-230: "On Dietary Laws, or Self-Restraint," 1537
293-307: "On the Law of War," 1539
331-33, letter to de Arcos, 1534
82-108, "On the Power of the Church (I)," 1532
Discussion

March 19 **no class**
March 20 paper due

March 21
Machiavelli, *Discourses* Book I, Book II chs 1-4
Machiavelli, letter to Vettori

March 26**:** Machiavelli, *Discourses,* rest of Book II

March 28: Machiavelli, *Discourses,* Book III **Discussion**

April 2: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

April 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince* **Discussion**

April 9: Machiavelli, *The Prince* **Discussion**

April 11: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Some guidelines for writing papers- *Jacob T. Levy, 2013.[1]*

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 stylish 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 overrides another, you normally have to give reasons why x is more important than y, not simply assert it.

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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.

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 misliked. 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 misliked. 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 infers.

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 *insures 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.[2]

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.

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

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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.

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.