

POLI 333: ANCIENT POLITICAL THOUGHT

FALL 2022 MW 10H05-11H25
MCINTYRE MEDICAL BUILDING 1034

DRAFT

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Office hours: TBA

Teaching Assistant: TBA
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Conferences will begin the week of Sept. 19

διότι δὲ πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῶν πάσης μελίττης καὶ παντὸς ἀγελαίου ζῴου μᾶλλον, δῆλον.
Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a8-9

Course Description:

This is a course in the political thought of the ancient Mediterranean world. We will focus our study on the two monumental works of the genre, Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, but we will also examine both the historical background of ancient Athenian political theory and its afterlife in the political thought of the Roman republic. The primary themes of the course will be the Greek understandings of politics, constitution, virtue, and law, and how these influenced the Roman conception of *res publica*.

This course is the first in a sequence of courses on the history of political thought offered by the Department of Political Science. **As a pre-requisite**, you must have taken at least one university-level course in political theory (preferably POLI 231), or a comparable course in philosophy. The readings for this course are quite difficult. They will, therefore, require patience and careful attention. There will be an exam on the alphabet and transliteration rules of Ancient Greek, weekly preparatory exercises, and a portfolio writing project.

Course Objectives:

The aims of the course include:

1. To begin students' training in the history of political thought, and to prepare students for POLI 334, the medieval political thought course that follows it in sequence;
2. 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;
3. To exercise students' ability to critically evaluate those texts, both with respect to the quality of their arguments and with respect to their normative or explanatory claims;
4. To offer students the opportunity to practice making normative and explanatory arguments about politics and society, and to improve students' skills at communicating such arguments in discussion and in written work

Books:

The primary course texts are available at The Word Bookstore, at 469 Milton St. (cash/cheque only). They are also available via course reserves in the Humanities & Social Sciences Library. If you can get the physical texts, I strongly encourage you to do so.

- Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated by Allan Bloom, Harper Collins/Basic Books (\$23)
- Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato, Volume 1: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Gorgias, Menexenus*, trans. R. Allen, Yale University Press (\$37)
- Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Joe Sachs, Focus Press (\$19)

Other course texts will be available electronically on myCourses.

The best way to get an understanding of the texts is to read them carefully and repeatedly. Every bit of time that you might spend reading a commentary or secondary work is time you could better spend studying the original text in greater depth. On the other hand, in a class such as this, where unfamiliar history and names will show up quite often, Wikipedia is a valuable resource, **if used selectively**. It is a very unreliable guide to ideas; don't look up "Plato" and think you're going to learn anything 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.

Schedule (lectures, readings, assignments, and IMPORTANT DATES):

Readings should be done before class on the dates indicated, since lectures will assume that the associated readings have already been done.

31 Aug. **The ancient Mediterranean and the shield of Achilles**

5 Sept. LABOUR DAY: NO LECTURE

7 Sept. **Pre-Socratic thought on justice and law**
Excerpts from the poetry of Theognis and Pindar
Aristotle, *The Constitution of Athens*, Part I
The Twelve Tables of Rome (skim)

12 Sept. **The regimes debate**
Herodotus, *History*, III.80-82
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, II:34-65
Euripides, excerpts from Suppliant Maidens

13 Sept. ADD/DROP DEADLINE

14 Sept. **Rhetoric**
Gorgias, "Encomium of Helen"
Plato, *Gorgias*

19 Sept. **What is justice?**
Plato, *Republic*, Book I
CONFERENCES BEGIN

21 Sept. **The city in speech**

Plato, *Republic*, Books II & III

- 26 Sept. **The virtues**
Republic, Book IV
Greek quiz
- 28 Sept. **Reforming politics**
Plato, *Republic*, Books V & VI
- 3 Oct. **What good is philosophy?**
Plato, *Republic*, Book VII
NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION
- 5 Oct. **The decline and fall of the city**
Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII & IX
- 10 Oct. FALL BREAK: NO LECTURE OR CONFERENCES
- 12 Oct. FALL BREAK: NO LECTURE OR CONFERENCES
- 13 Oct. MONDAY SCHEDULE (NO CONFERENCES)
First paper opportunity
- 14 Oct. TUESDAY SCHEDULE: NO CONFERENCES
- 17 Oct. **The critique of poetry and religion**
Plato, *Republic*, Book X
Plato, *Euthyphro*
- 19 Oct. **Human happiness**
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, excerpts
- 24 Oct. **Politics and human nature**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I
- 26 Oct. **Slavery and the household**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I
- 31 Oct. **Citizenship**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II
- 2 Nov. **Claims to rule**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
- 7 Nov. **Claims to rule, part two**

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
Second paper opportunity

9 Nov. **The end of politics**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII

14 Nov. **The variety of regimes**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV

16 Nov. **Revolution and reform**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V

21 Nov. **The Hellenistic schools**

23 Nov. **Epicureanism**
Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, excerpts from Books III & V

28 Nov. **Cicero**
Cicero, *On Duties*, I.1-41, 59-73, 93-121

30 Nov. **Roman republicanism**
Cicero, *On Duties*, II.1-31; III.35-39, 50-57

5 Dec. **The legacy of ancient political thought**
Third paper opportunity

Course requirements and rules:

The marks in this course will be distributed as follows:

Paper 1 (1000-1200 words):	30%
Paper 2 (1000-1200 words):	30%
Greek alphabet & transliteration quiz:	10%
Conference attendance:	10%
Conference participation:	10%
Self-evaluation and course plan	10%

Papers: You have three opportunities to write two papers of 1000-1200 words each. I will post assignments for the individual paper opportunities on myCourses by the first day of classes. You are not expected to consult secondary sources beyond the assigned readings. Your papers should focus on the primary materials from the syllabus. However, if you do consult external sources, you must acknowledge these sources in your references.

Papers are to be handed in to me in class on the day noted on the schedule. All papers must be double-spaced, at least 11-point font, with proper reference citations. Do not include a title page but **do** give your essay a title. Your name, along with a final word count (including footnotes), should appear at the very end of your essay – and only at the very end of your essay! If you are using notes, please use numbered footnotes (not endnotes, and Arabic not Roman numerals). I do not care which reference citation system you use for modern works, so long as your citations

are consistent and complete. Ancient texts must be cited using standard line numbers – I will explain these in class. Papers that fail to meet these criteria will be penalized by dropping to the next possible letter grade (e.g., from A to A-).

Your paper must fall exactly between 1000-1200 words (including footnotes); anything below this length will be deemed insufficient; anything beyond this length will not be read past 1200 words. If you are writing in French, you may add 10% to these wordcount totals to accommodate the inherent prolixity of the language (i.e., 1100-1320 words).

Greek quiz: I will ask you to memorize the Greek alphabet and the rules for transliterating between ancient Greek and Latin languages. You will be tested on this knowledge on 23 September, in class. Study materials and further details can be found on myCourses.

Conference attendance & participation: Conferences will be structured to permit a high level of discussion and the close analysis of texts. You are expected to come to conferences prepared to discuss each assigned text; you may wish to prepare talking points for yourself. Your participation mark will reflect both the regularity of your participation and your preparedness.

You get three free class absences, no questions asked. Use them wisely. For each conference that you miss after the three freebies, your absence will be reflected in the attendance component of your conference mark dropping by 25%.

Self-evaluation & course plan:

Mobile Computing or Communications Devices: This is a manual note-taking lecture course. Mobile computing or communications devices (including laptops, recording devices, phones, or tablets) may not be used or displayed in class (unless a student has received explicit permission from the instructor). If you bring such devices to class, they must be off and out of view.

There are three basic reasons for this policy:

1. A growing body of scientific evidence indicates that mobile computing and other devices pose a significant distraction for both users and fellow students during class, inhibiting the ability to focus on and digest classroom material.
2. A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that the use of such devices in class leads to poorer overall course performance and poorer learning and retention.
3. Taking notes by hand is, for most students, slower than typing them. You may be able to transcribe a lecture almost verbatim when typing, but this is impossible if you are writing by hand. To take effective notes manually, therefore, you must both digest and synthesize the main points of a lecture. Not only is this process of digesting and synthesizing on the fly an important skill worth mastering, but it may also itself play a crucial role in learning the material.¹

¹ For evidence of the first two points, see, e.g.: C.B. Fried, "In-class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," *Computers & Education* 50.3 (2008): 906-914, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2006.09.006> ; and F. Sana, T. Weston, and N. J. Cepeda, "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers," *Computers & Education* 62 (2013): 24-31, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.10.003>. For further discussion, see also Josh Fischman, "Students Stop Surfing After Being Shown How In-Class Laptop Use Lowers Test Scores," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (March 16, 2009), available at <http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Students-Stop-Surfing-After/4576> . For a more general discussion of the issue of computers in the classroom, see the interesting article by Laura Mortkowitz, "More colleges, professors shutting down laptops and

Exceptions: I may grant explicit permission for the use of a computer in particular circumstances for students for whom its use is justified to facilitate in-class notetaking or learning. If you think your circumstances require the use of a laptop, etc., during lectures, please speak to me.

Late Work: Since you have three opportunities to write two papers, no late papers will be accepted for any reason whatsoever. If circumstances arise that prevent you from handing in your paper on time, you will receive an F on that paper.

I strongly recommend that you not frivolously use up your bonus paper opportunity in the first round, since no exceptions will be made for late papers under any circumstances. If circumstances in the first round have led you to miss that paper assignment, I strongly suggest that you plan on submitting your next papers at least two days before they are due in order to avoid any unforeseeable circumstances, such as an illness, that may prevent you from being able to hand in your paper on its due date.

In order to pass this course, you must receive a passing grade on each component of the course that is worth at least 20%. In other words, in order to pass you must submit two papers of passing quality. If a paper is plagiarized and as a result ineligible for passing credit, you will fail the course. By remaining in this class, you agree to these terms.

Process for appealing a grade: You must submit your paper (along with the TA's comments) to me in person, with a one-page note explaining why, according to the posted grading criteria, your paper was significantly misevaluated. I will then reassess your paper. This reassessment may raise or lower the grade. Papers for which I was the initial grader may be submitted to the Department of Political Science for appeal.

This class is graded on a 4.0 scale not a 100-point scale (as per p. 92 of McGill's Undergraduate Programs, Courses and University Regulations, 2021-2022). Example: You receive a B+ on a paper, which is worth 20% of the course grade. Therefore, this assignment contributes .667 (3.33 x 20%) grade points towards your final course grade.

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 <https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/plagiarism> 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 <https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/plagiarism>).

Obviously, downloading or purchasing whole papers is plagiarism, but you can be guilty of plagiarism for much less than that. Any time you copy someone else's words and paste them into your paper without quotation marks, a full citation, and due credit, you have committed academic dishonesty; one sentence from Wikipedia is enough to count. Other people's ideas usually warrant a footnote, other people's words always demand quotation marks and a full citation.

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. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

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

Academic freedom: Academic freedom in a university setting differs from freedom of speech in society at large; it is not the right to say just anything you want to say. It guarantees scholars – including both faculty and students – protection for their scholarly inquiries regardless of the conclusions that they reach, while also demanding respect for scholarly methods. One element of this protection is that scholars will not be sanctioned within the classroom for what happens outside of it. The other major element is that scholars will be evaluated on the basis of their use of scholarly methods, not on the basis of the conclusions that they reach.

What this means in a class like this is: **your grade will not be affected by your speech in nonacademic settings, and it will not be affected by such things as whether the political conclusion you argue for is popular among fellow students, is shared by the TA, or is shared by the professor.** We are studying controversial and complicated questions, and you will be evaluated on the basis of considerations such as the quality of your arguments, the quality of your writing, and the careful use of sources, not on the basis of the political orientation of your conclusions.

Land acknowledgment: McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.