



Great Political Thinkers: Ancient Political Thought

Yeshiva College
Spring 2021
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Course Description

It has been commonly said that Western Civilization of which America has long been considered a part was formed through the combination of, or creative tension between, the ideas typified by two cities: Athens and Jerusalem. Scholars have recently highlighted Biblical teachings ideas on questions we might now call political. But it is in the political thought of Greece that we find active philosophic reflection on the nature of politics and an argument for the centrality of politics in human life. One can even go further: in the writers of Greek antiquity we encounter the argument that the study of politics may be the key to

This course aims to offer an introductory tour through the political thought of several of the [fYU]ghia]bXg:cZ; fYVW" 6i h\Y]f]bg] [\hg'UFY'bchcb`mí; fYY_Í ']bg] [\hg/hYmfYa U]b'fY'Yj Unt and in need of reckoning with in our times. Those insights relate to questions including: what is the relationship between individual excellence and communal excellence? Is thought superior to action or is action superior to thought? What is justice and how much justice can be realized in the world? What does war teach us about human nature? What is virtue and what is its relation to laws? To what extent are knowledge and politics tied together?

These questions, and many more, will be addressed through a careful and close reading of gYa]bU' hY hg'cZ'UbWYbhdC`]h'W' h'ci [\h' H'i W'X]XYgD D'U'cDg' ž'UbX'5 f]g'hYDg'. Read in tandem, these works present difficult and richly illuminating accounts of fundamental questions thoughtful people face in all times and places.

Course Format

The first several weeks of the course will be conducted via Zoom. After this time, the course k]''di fgj Y'U'í \mVf]XÍ 'a cXY'k]h' gca Y''YVh fYg'hU_]b['d'UW'cb'Wla di g'UbX'c'hYfg'hU_]bg

place exclusively on Zoom. Live-streaming will be offered to enrolled students who cannot attend in person.

For Political Science majors

The course counts toward the introductory course requirement or political theory distribution.

Expectations

Students will be expected to carefully read between 100 and 150 pages a week. The class is not a lecture course. Students will be expected to make their own arguments of the texts through careful interpretation of the texts themselves. The readings in this course are extensive. While students will be forgiven for not understanding everything, they will pledge to do their utmost to grapple with the texts. The principal role of the instructor is to help



Week 6 (Feb 22- 24): Readings: Books VII-J
Í 5 h Yb]ub'8 YZYUñ '7 cbW g]cb"

Week 7 (March 1- 3) Plato Book I.

Week 8 (March 8- 10) Books II - III. SHORT ESSAY DUE

Week 9 (March 15- 17) Book IV - V.

Week 10 (March 22): Book VI.

Week 11 (April 7): Book VII.

Week 12 (April 12- 14): Books VIII - X.

Week 13 (April 19- 21): Aristotle Book I.

Week 14 (April 26- 28): Books III-IV,V (selections).

Week 15 (May 3): Conclusion & Review LONG ESSAY DUE

May 4 TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED