

Political Science 209
Professor Brian J. Shaw

Medieval Political Philosophy
Spring Semester 2006

Office: Chambers 3014
Hours: MWF, 2:30-3:30; TuTh, 4:00-5:00 (by appointment)
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Texts:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Free Press, 1997)
St. Augustine, *Political Writings* (Hackett, 1994)
Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy* (Cornell, 1963)

All three texts are available in paperback editions in the Student Store.

Goals of the Course:

The course offers a survey of the thought of some of the major Christian, Muslim and Jewish philosophers whose writings speak, directly and indirectly, to perennial political questions. Among these questions are the following:

What is the best or most just political society? What is justice? Is it natural or conventional? What is the relation of political justice and the good for individuals? Is justice natural and universal, or do its meaning vary among different peoples? If justice exists, how does one come to know it? By means of rational inquiry? Or special revelation? Is the just life one of obedience to laws or principles or the cultivation of virtues? Or something else again?

What is the relation between political life and religious faith? What is piety? Does it consist preeminently in good (lawful or morally virtuous) conduct or the attainment of special knowledge? If the former, in what kind of conduct? If the latter, in what sort of knowledge? Is religion essential to a just society? Or is piety subversive of political life?

What is the relation between politics and philosophy? Is the life of reason and rational inquiry supportive or corrosive of political life?

What is the relation of philosophy and religion? Is philosophy compatible with piety?

Finally, what is the best way of life? That of the statesman? The pious person? The philosopher? Or yet another way of life, such as that of the tyrant or warrior or poet? If there is a best way of life, are all persons capable of achieving it? And what is the relation of this way of life to others?

Examinations:

The evaluation of each student's comprehension of the course materials will consist primarily of three open-book, take-home reviews. The first will be handed out Thursday, February 2 and returned by noon on Friday, February 10. The second will be handed out Tuesday, March 14 and returned by noon on Friday, March 24. The final review will be handed out Thursday, April 27 and returned by noon, Thursday, May 4.

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All reviews will be typed. Late reviews will be penalized one letter grade for each class day they are late, save for final reviews, which will be penalized one letter grade for each calendar day they are late.

In addition to these three assignments, a portion of each student's course grade shall be determined by his or her participation in class discussion. The weight of each requirement is as follows:

First Review:	25%
Second Review:	30%
Final Review:	35%
Class Discussion:	10%

Class Participation:

The course is structured primarily about the discussion of the assigned texts. It is accordingly extremely important that students have familiarized themselves with the readings before each meeting. It is also important that students conscientiously attend class. Students are allowed 2 unexcused cuts; absences in excess of this number will result in a grade of "F" for class discussion.

Final Note:

While this course is not cumulative in the usual sense, it is indeed developmental, and the written examinations and discussions will reflect this. It is thus important that the student make every effort to deep abreast of the schedule of readings. It is very difficult to assimilate this material in a "cram course" fashion. The topical organization of the course is the following:

- I. Introduction and Welcome
- II. St. Augustine and the Two Cities
- III. Political Philosophy in Medieval Islam and Judaism
- IV. St. Thomas and After

All provisions of the DAVIDSON HONOR CODE are in effect for this course, and all written work shall be pledged in accordance with it. Unpledged reviews will not be accepted and Honor Code violations will be vigorously prosecuted. Students uncertain about the terms and requirements of the Code should request clarification from the instructor.

Detailed Schedule of Readings:

- I. Introduction: What is Medieval Political Theory? -- And Why Study It? (January 10-12)

Session 1. A Close and Distant World (Jan 10)

Reading: none

Session 2. Politics and Religion (Jan 12)

Reading: "On Civil Religion" (Bk. IV, Ch. VIII of Rousseau's *Du Contract Social*)
(Photocopy Handout)

Ernest Fortin, "Introduction" to Augustine, *Political Writings*, vii-xxxiii.
Augustine, *Political Writings*, 1-2.

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II. St. Augustine and the Two Cities (January 17— February 10)

Session 3. Rome's Fall, Justice and Divine Providence (Jan 17)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 3-35.

Session 4. Piety, Philosophy and Civil Theology (Jan 19)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 36-77

Session 5. Charity, Lust and the Origin of the Two Cities (Jan 24)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 78-109

Session 6. The Development of the Two Cities (Jan 26)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 110-139

Session 7. Earthy Compromises and the True Republic (Jan 31)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 140-174

Session 8. Endless Torment or Eternal Peace? The Destinations of the Two Cities (Feb 2)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 175-212
FIRST REVIEW OUT

Session 9. Living In a World of Sin (I) (Feb 7)
Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*, 213-256

Session 10. Living in a World of Sin (II) (Feb 9)
Reading: None

FIRST REVIEW DUE: Friday Noon (Feb 10),.

III. Political Philosophy in Medieval Islam and Judaism (February 14 – March 24)

Session 11. Reading Medieval Philosophy: Alfarabi's "Enumeration" (Feb 14)
Reading: Lerner and Mahdi, *Medieval Political Philosophy*, vii-viii; 1-20; 22-30

Session 12. Philosophy and Politics: Alfarabi's "Political Regime" (Feb 16)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 31-57

21) Session 13. Philosophy, Politics and the Law (I): Alfarabi's "Happiness" and "Laws" (Feb 21)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 58-94

Session 14. Philosophy, Politics and the Law (II): Ibn Tufayl's "Hayy" (Feb 23)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 134-62

SPRING BREAK (Feb. 25- March 5)

Session 15. Philosophy, Politics and the Law (III): Averroes' "Decisive Treatise" (March 7)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 163-186

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Session 16. Philosophy and Prophecy (I): Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* (March 9)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 188-207

Session 17. Philosophy and Prophecy (II): Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* (March 14)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 207-226
SECOND REVIEW OUT

Session 18. NO CLASS (March 16)
Reading: None

Session 19. Credulity, Freedom and Providence: Maimonides' "Astrology" (March 21)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 227-236

Session 20. Alfarabi to Maimonides (March 23)
Reading: None

SECOND REVIEW DUE, Friday, Noon (March 24).

IV. St. Thomas and After (March 28 – May 2)

Session 21. The State as Natural (and Beneficent) Order (March 28)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vii-xxxvii; 3-10

Session 22. On Law, and especially the Eternal Law (March 30)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 11-41

Session 23. Natural and Human (Positive) Law (April 4)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 42-64

Session 24. Human Law and Judicial Precepts (April 6)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 65-91

Session 25. Sedition, Right and Justice (April 11)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 92-126

Session 26. Theft and Obedience (April 13)
Reading: *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 127-142; 158-172

EASTER BREAK (April 15-18)

Session 27. Royal vs. Papal Power: Giles of Rome and John of Paris (April 20)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 391-417

Session 28. Marsilius (I): "Civil Happiness...the Ultimate Aim of Human Acts" (April 25)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 439-466

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Session 29. Marsilius (II): The Common Good and Popular Sovereignty (April 27)
Reading: *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 466-491
FINAL REVIEW OUT

Session 30. Conclusion and Review (May 2)
Reading: None

FINAL REVIEW DUE, Thursday Noon, May 4.