

Political Science 208
Fall 2005
Peter Ahrens Dorf

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Office Hours:
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CLASSICAL POLITICAL THEORY

Texts to be Purchased:

Four Texts on Socrates, trans. T. and G. West (Cornell).
The Republic of Plato, trans. A. Bloom (Basic Books).
Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, trans. J. Sachs (Focus).
Aristotle, The Politics, trans. C. Lord. (Chicago).

Goals of the Course:

The goal of this course is to understand as clearly as we can the Socratic revolution in the history of thought, why Socrates founded political philosophy, and the radical challenge that classical political philosophy poses to modern and contemporary political thought. In this course, we will explore such fundamental and perennial questions as:

- 1) What is the best political society? Is democracy superior to aristocracy or monarchy (or tyranny)? Should political society be communistic or non-communistic? Should political societies be small or large, commercial or austere, tolerant or intolerant?
- 2) What is the best way of life? That of the statesman? or the pious person? or the poet? or the philosopher? or the tyrant?
- 3) What is the nature of human beings? Are we fundamentally equal or unequal? Political or apolitical? Just or unjust? Rational or irrational? Mortal or immortal?
- 4) What is justice? Is a just political society possible? Is it better to be just or unjust?
- 5) What is the relation between philosophy and politics? Is philosophy dangerous to or beneficial to political society?
- 6) What is the relation between religion and politics? Is religion necessary for a decent and stable political society? Or does religion tend to undermine political life?
- 7) What is the relation between philosophy or reason and religion or faith? Is there a fundamental conflict or harmony between the two?

Requirements:

There will be one 4-5 page paper (worth 20%), two 5-7 page papers (worth 25% each), and a final (self-scheduled) exam (worth 25%). You must do all of the written work in order to pass the course. You will be docked a half of a grade (for example, from A to A-) on a paper which you hand in late unless you either have asked for (and received) my permission beforehand or have a very good excuse. Roughly 5% of your grade will be determined by class participation. You will be expected to read the assigned texts carefully before we discuss them in class. Regular attendance is expected.

Assignments:

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| August 22 | Introduction. |
| August 24 | Aristophanes, <u>Clouds</u> , lines 1-813. |
| August 26 | <u>Clouds</u> , lines 814-end. |
| August 29 | <u>Clouds</u> . |
| August 31 | Plato, <u>Republic I</u> . |
| September 2 | <u>Republic I</u> . |
| September 5 | <u>Republic I</u> . |
| September 7 | Republic I. |
| September 9 | <u>Republic II</u> . |
| September 12 | <u>Republic II</u> . |
| September 14 | <u>Republic II</u> . |
| September 16 | <u>Republic III</u> . |
| September 19 | <u>Republic III</u> . <u>FIRST PAPER DUE.</u> |
| September 21 | <u>Republic IV</u> . |
| September 23 | <u>Republic IV</u> . |
| September 26 | <u>Republic V</u> |
| September 28 | <u>Republic V</u> |
| September 30 | <u>Republic VI</u> (esp. 484a-502d) |
| October 3 | <u>Republic VII</u> (514a-521c). |
| October 5 | <u>Republic VII</u> (514a-521c, 539e-541b). |
| October 7 | <u>Republic VIII-IX</u> , esp. 555a-561e, 587d-592b, and X, esp. 608b-621d. |

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| October 12 | Aristotle, <u>Ethics I</u> |
| October 14 | <u>Ethics I</u> |
| October 17 | <u>Ethics I</u> <u>SECOND PAPER DUE</u> |
| October 19 | <u>Ethics II</u> |
| October 21 | <u>Ethics III</u> |
| October 24 | <u>Ethics IV</u> |
| October 26 | <u>Ethics IV</u> |
| October 28 | <u>Ethics IV</u> |
| October 31 | <u>Ethics V</u> |
| November 2 | <u>Ethics VI</u> |
| November 4 | NO CLASS |
| November 7 | <u>Ethics VII</u> |
| November 9 | <u>Ethics VIII-IX</u> |
| November 11 | <u>Ethics X</u> |
| November 14 | <u>Ethics X</u> |
| November 16 | Aristotle, <u>Politics I</u> , chaps. 1-2 |
| November 18 | <u>Politics I</u> , chap. 2 |
| November 21 | <u>Politics II</u> , chaps. 1-5 |
| November 28 | <u>Politics II</u> , chaps. 7-8 |
| November 30 | <u>Politics III</u> , chaps. 6-13, 17-18 |
| December 2 | <u>Politics IV</u> , chaps. 3, 8-12 |
| December 5 | <u>Politics VII</u> , chaps. 1-3 |

December 7

Overview

THIRD PAPER DUE