
POLITICAL SCIENCE 323

HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Dr. John Marini

Off: MSS 219
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This course will provide a general overview of the political thought of the ancient world. It will focus primarily on the most important works on politics written in antiquity--Plato's *Republic*, and the *Politics* of Aristotle. We will also pay special attention to the trial and death of Socrates. Much of the vocabulary of our politics, and the form of government to which we are accustomed, had its origins in ancient Athens. That democracy, and its aftermath, gave rise to some of the most profound theoretical works about politics ever written. In the long history of the West, we have assumed the meaning of concepts such as justice, nature, convention, reason, virtue, regime, and the common good. But, the meaning--and the importance--of those terms is now in doubt. In our time, we tend to look to science as the undisputed authority in terms of understanding politics. The original political science of Plato and Aristotle looked to philosophy. In looking again at the origins of political thought, we can learn to ask questions of those texts which were once the standard for judging political life.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Allan Bloom, trans., *The Republic of Plato*
- Carnes Lord, trans., *The Politics of Aristotle*
- Thomas G. West, trans., *Four Texts on Socrates*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There will be one essay exam, a review essay, and a comprehensive final exam during the semester, as well as a term paper. In determining the final course grade, the midterm essays will represent 30% of the grade, the final will represent 25% of the grade, and the final paper will constitute 25% of the grade. The remaining 20% of the grade will be determined by performance in assignments--some written--not made in advance, and classroom participation. Each student is expected to complete all the reading assignments before the class meeting. Grades in this course will be awarded using the plus/minus grading system. Student (and faculty) conduct shall conform to the standards of conduct as referenced in the University of Nevada, Reno 2008-2009 General Catalog and the Student Handbook. The University of Nevada does not tolerate sexual harassment or harassment of any kind of its students or employees. Disability related needs will be accommodated. Cheating in any form or manner may result in an automatic grade of "F" for this course for the semester. The term paper will be due on Monday, December 8, 2009.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK:**ASSIGNMENT:**

August 25: Introduction: Discussion of course content, class requirements, and overview of subject. Read Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, and Bloom's Preface.

September 1: *Republic*, Book 1: The problem of justice.

September 8: *Republic*, Book 2: Justice and injustice, what they are in a city and a man.

September 15: *Republic*, Book 3: The origin of the city.

September 22: *Republic*, Book 4: The quest for the best regime.

September 29: *Republic*, Book 5: The just city.

October 6: *Republic*, Book 6: The rule of the philosophers.

October 13: *Republic*, Books 7-8: The unjust cities.

October 20: *Republic*, Books 9-10: Nature of the human soul.

October 27: *Politics*, Book 1: Economics--or theory of the Household.

November 3: *Politics*, Book 2: The Ideal State

November 10: *Politics*, Books 3-4: Citizenship and Constitutions.

November 17: *Politics*, Books 5-6: Revolutions and Change.

November 24: *Politics*, Books 7-8: Political Ideals and Education.

(Note: Thursday, November 26, Holiday)--No class.

December 1: Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*, Trial and Death of Socrates.

December 8: Concluding Reflections on the Socratic Legacy.

Final Exam: Thursday, December 10, 7:30-9:30 a.m.