Mark Twain defined a classic as “a book everyone wants to have read but no one wants to read.” This course is designed to prove him wrong. Here at Rutgers Newark, we believe that an essential requirement of a liberal arts education is basic familiarity with the classical writings of the Western political tradition.

The course surveys the history of political thought from ancient Greece and Rome, through medieval Christianity, to the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. We are reading some of the most important writings of the Western political tradition. In lectures and class discussions, we will situate the authors in their historical context and consider the applicability of their ideas to our own times. Through the theorists, we will reflect on such questions as: What do human beings want, what makes them happy? What is a good life? What is freedom? How is freedom related to law, order, and security? Are all men and women equal or should they be? Why do we have government? What should government do? What is democracy, is it a good form of government, and is it possible everywhere? Why are people religious believers, and what should be the relationship between religion and politics, church and state? Is there such a thing as just war or a just use of violence? Is imperialism ever justified? Can democracies be imperial powers and remain democracies? Does life, does history have meaning or purpose?

Since this is a course in the history of political theory, we seek to understand how these questions have been addressed and answered at different times, and how this tradition of political thought has shaped our own ideas, attitudes and expectations. We shall pay particular attention this semester to (1) the development of theories of just warfare; and (2) each theorist’s comments—or silence—about the role of women in politics and society.

**REQUIRED READINGS** (available Rutgers Bookstore, Hahnes Bldg). All are paperbacks.


Course Requirements:

Midterm and Final Examinations.
Three short quizzes on the readings during the semester.
One-page definitions of key concepts, periodically throughout the semester.
One short paper on Thucydides’ The Melian Dialogue. Paper will be graded on content and on writing style so we will pay special attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
One in-class presentation: Each student will make one short presentation showing how the assigned reading for the day casts light on some political event or issue described in a current newspaper, political blog, or news magazine.

Students are expected to attend class regularly, to keep pace with the readings, and to participate knowledgeably in class discussions. Grades will be based on class participation and knowledge of the readings, on quiz grades, definitional statements, short papers, presentations, and on the examinations. Class attendance is very important; no more than two unexcused absences are permissible. Students are responsible for all course readings regardless of whether they are discussed in class.

N.B. According to University policy, absences are excused only in the case of illness, death in the family, religious observance, or official college business. These instances must be documented and also approved in advance when the instance was foreseeable. Note: having an airline ticket to travel (unless it is for one of the documented reasons listed above) is not grounds for an excused absence.

Please note:
Grades will be lowered for papers submitted late.
Makeup examinations will not be given.
Grades of Absent or Incomplete will not be given.

Grading:
Midterm & Final Exams 50%
Short Papers 10%
Quizzes & Definitions 20%
Class Participation 10%
In-Class Presentation 10%
I. INTRODUCTION

II. PLATO
Plato, The Republic (entire).
Susan Okin, “Philosopher Queens and Private Wives, Plato on Women and the Family.”

III ARISTOTLE
Aristotle, The Politics (selections)
Christine Pierce, “Natural Law Language and Women.”

IV. ROME AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Scriptural passages relevant to politics & government.
Augustine, Excerpts from The City of God.
H.A. Deane, The Political & Social Ideas of St. Augustine

VI. MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT
Sigmund ed., St. Thomas Aquinas on Ethics & Politics (selections)

VII. RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION
Machiavelli, The Prince (all), and The Discourses (selections)
Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority,” Harro Hopfl, ed.

VIII. CONCLUSION
Summary and Review
Recommended Readings: Here are a few suggestions from a vast literature.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War.*
Natalie Harris Bluestone, *Women and the Ideal Society.*
H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks*
Thomas Cahill, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter.*
Susan Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought.*
Thomas Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*
Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*
Pau Sigmund, *Natural Law in Political Thought.*
Garry Wills, *Augustine.*
St. Augustine, *Confessions.*
Henry Paolucci, ed., *The Political Writings of St. Augustine.*
Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*
Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages.*
Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*
F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas*
John Dillenberger, ed., *The Political Writings of Martin Luther*
John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics*
Hannah Piltin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender & Politics in the Thought of Machiavelli*
Joan Kelly, “Did Woman Have a Renaissance?” in *Women, History, and Theory.*
Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*
Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther.*
Mushin Mahdi, *Islamic Political Thought*
Alfarabi, *The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.*
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| Jan 16 | Introduction. Background on the Ancient Greeks and Political Theory.  
Blueprint for Political Theory. Thucydides: Melian Dialogue from the  
History of Peloponnesian War.                                        |
| Jan. 23| PLATO: Cornford Introduction and Book I of The Republic.              
One-page definition of justice due. Books II-IV (pp. 41-174).         |
Discussion of Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue Film, The Trial of Socrates. |
| Feb. 6 | QUIZ on Plato’s Republic.                                            
Susan Okin on Plato, “Philosopher Queens & Private Wives.”            
Introduction to Aristotle (life and context).                          |
| Feb. 13| ARISTOTLE Politics, Bks I and II (pp. 1-56). Definition of equality due.  
Politics, Bks. III (all) and Book IV, chs. 11-12 (pp. 179-186).        |
| Feb. 20| ARISTOTLE continued discussion of Books III and part of IV (pp. 179-186).  
Christine Pierce, “Natural Law Language & Women.”                      |
| February 27 | MIDTERM EXAM                                                            |
| Mar. 6  | ROME AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY                                           
| Mar. 13 | Spring Recess (no class).                                             |
| Mar. 20 | ST. AUGUSTINE on The City of God and The City of Man                   
H.A. Deane, The Political & Social Ideas of Augustine, chs. 2 to 6,  
(on govt, church & state, law, political order, toleration of heresy). |
| Mar. 27 | Quiz on Augustine’s political thought. Justifiable war and theories of  
Just War in Augustine’s thought. Garry Wills, “What Is a Just War?” in  
NYRB, Nov. 18, 2004. Accessible at www.nybooks.com. Film on Islam and  
its impact after the decline of the Roman Empire. Begin Aquinas.         |
Apr. 3 AQUINAS AND MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT
Sigmund, pp. 14-28; pp. 61-68 (heresy, war).

Apr. 10 QUIZ on Aquinas. Aquinas on just war theory.
Aquinas on politics and law: legislating morality, obeying an unjust law).
M.L. King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail. Available online (see above).

Apr. 17 MACHIAVELLI, THE RENAISSANCE, & THE REFORMATION
The Prince (entire). Definition of power due.
Machiavelli’s The Discourses (selections). The precarious nature of politics between competing Italian city-states during the Renaissance.

Apr. 24 Reformation Political Thought: How does the State cope with pluralism?
Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority.” Excerpts from film on Luther.
John Calvin, “On Civil Government”
Last Class: Review and Summation prior to final exam.

FINAL EXAM: We follow the Rutgers University Newark schedule of final examinations.
The date of the final exam has not yet been determined. As soon as that information is available, I will let you know.