

# CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

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**Section 13:** M/W, 10:30-11:50, Gates-Blake 321  
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*... if again I say that to talk every day about virtue and the other things about which you hear me talking and examining myself and others is the greatest good to man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you will believe me still less. This is as I say, gentlemen, but it is not easy to convince you.*

- Socrates in Plato's *Apology* (38a)

Welcome to Classics of Social and Political Thought—a course that affords us the unique opportunity to talk about some of the things that have for millennia puzzled many of the most formidable Western thinkers. Socrates was famously put to death for his commitment to the examined life; for us the stakes are decidedly lower, and yet potentially very high indeed. In this course, we will be confronted with texts that can confound, alienate, or even infuriate. Our challenge will be to take seriously the concepts, arguments, and depictions of political life they contain, to read them carefully and critically but also charitably, and to discuss them together in the same spirit. When done well, this sort of collective dialogue can have a profound effect not only on our interpretations of philosophical texts from the past but, moreover, on our opinions about ourselves and the social and political institutions that confront us today.

This first section of Classics spans the history of Western political reflection from the city-states of ancient Greece to those of Renaissance Italy. It begins with ancient conceptions of political organization, human nature, virtue and slavery, and touches on the later impact of Christianity through Thomas Aquinas before ending with the humanist response to the classical past and to classical conceptions of virtue in the political thought of Machiavelli. This section thus provides the foundation for Winter and Spring Quarters, where we will witness the afterlife and seemingly inexhaustible powers of these ancient texts to stimulate and structure political thinking in later centuries.

**Required Texts** (ordered at Seminary Cooperative Bookstore)

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1991)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. CDC Reeve (Hackett, 1998)

Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans./ed. William P. Baumgarth & Richard J. Regan, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett, 2003)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago, 1998)

\*\* Students are required to use these editions of the texts in order to facilitate common discussion. Additional shorter selections will be posted on the course's Chalk site.

# CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

**\*\* You must submit all written assignments and have a passing participation grade to pass the course \*\***

### Written Work (65%)

<u>Response</u>	<b>Oct. 9</b>	Thrasymachus	<b>5%</b>
<u>Paper 1</u>	<b>Nov. 14</b>	<i>Republic</i>	<b>30%</b>
<u>First Draft</u>	<b>Oct. 26</b>		
<u>Paper 2</u>	<b>Dec. 10</b>	Aristotle, Aquinas, and/or Machiavelli	<b>30%</b>

### Participation (35%)

Discussion Leading **25%**

To facilitate discussion, students in assigned pairs will be required to lead a **15-minute** discussion of a reading for one session; this question will be provided by the instructor. Discussion leaders should present the question and their response, elicit responses from other students, listen to them carefully, follow up respectfully, and respond to the question themselves if necessary. They must distribute a one-page handout advancing a thesis in response to the question, and providing at least two premises in support of the thesis. Pairs will be assigned, and further details provided, in class on **M. Oct. 19**.

Discussion **10%**

This is a seminar, organized around discussion. Students must arrive to class having done the readings, and prepared to discuss them and any issues arising therefrom. Classics is a collaborative effort, and each of us is responsible for creating and maintaining a forum in which ideas can be discussed and challenged in a courteous and respectful manner. Belligerence or intimidation will not be tolerated, and may result in failure of the course. Following these basic—and hopefully obvious—parameters will permit us to reason together collectively. For some this will come naturally; for others, it will be difficult. But for everyone, philosophical dialogue is a skill that requires considerable cultivation and practice, and your participation grade turns on the quality, not the quantity of your contributions.

Attendance **MANDATORY**

Attendance will be recorded. You must arrive to class on time with your text and reading notes. Absences will be excused only for religious observance, personal injury or illness, or family emergency. You are permitted **one** unexcused absence; more than one unexcused absence will result in a reduction of your final grade by one-third of a letter grade, and students with more than two unexcused absences will be presumed to have withdrawn. **All those who miss a session, for any reason, must email both the instructor and intern a 350-word reflection on the reading for that session.**

**\*\* 'Excused' absences are those of which 24hour advance notice has been communicated to the instructor; absences are NOT retroactively 'excused' by the submission of a reflection \*\***

## CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

### OTHER CONVENTIONS

*Paper Submission:* Papers should be submitted by email to **both instructor and intern** in **Word format only**. They are to be submitted by **11pm**: you will be permitted one extension of 24 hours, but you must inform the instructor and intern of your intention to use that extension 24 hours in advance of the original deadline. After this, no late papers will be accepted. **Word limits are exclusive of footnotes and headings and will be strictly enforced:** failure to meet the minimum will result in the reduction of your paper grade by one full letter grade; all words in excess of the maximum will not be marked.

*Academic Integrity:* **Do not plagiarize.** Any instance of plagiarism will result in the failure of the relevant paper, withdrawal or failure of the course, and referral to university administration. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, please ask either the instructor or intern before you submit your paper, and consult your copy of *Doing Honest Work in College*. Keep in mind this extract from the American Historical Association: 'Plagiarism includes more subtle and perhaps more pernicious abuses than simply expropriating the exact wording of another author without attribution. Plagiarism also includes the limited borrowing, without attribution, of another person's distinctive and significant research findings, hypotheses, theories, rhetorical strategies, or interpretations, or an extended borrowing even with attribution'. **Do not plagiarize.**

*Writing Assistance:* I urge students to get all the help they can get with their paper writing, consistent with standards of academic honesty (see above). Students should try to write drafts well ahead of the paper deadlines, and to have others read those drafts. First year students may consult about their papers with the writing interns assigned to their Humanities Core sections. All students may consult with the writing tutors available in the North Reading Room of Harper Commons. See also this guide to writing in college: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/index.htm>

*Computers and Electronics:* Laptops, e-readers, tablets, smart phones and all similar devices are not to be used in class and are to be kept off and out of sight during class. If you fail to abide by this convention you will be considered absent for the day and be asked to surrender your device for all subsequent sessions over the quarter. Lastly, **if your cell phone rings during class, your final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade for each infraction.**

*Additional Sources:* **Additional sources are not permitted.** Classics is a text seminar, as distinct from an author seminar. Each of the thinkers we will read was prolific, writing without the dubious benefit of the disciplinary categories that frame modern scholarship and covering what can now seem like an extraordinary range of phenomena. However, we will make little attempt to take account of the other texts that constitute their wider projects. Moreover, each writer emerged out of epochal historical transformations, and has to be understood as one among many who were trying to make sense of their world with the intellectual resources available at the time. Again, we will not be able to pursue the many literatures that put our authors in their historical and social context. Unacknowledged use of secondary material constitutes plagiarism and will be addressed as outlined above. **Additional sources are not permitted.**

# CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

## READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS SCHEDULE

### Weeks 1-5 PLATO

M. Sept. 28 *Republic* I 327a-336a (pp. 3-13)  
W. Sept. 30 *Republic* I 336b to II 367e (pp. 13-44)

M. Oct. 5 *Republic* II 367e through III (pp. 44-96)  
W. Oct. 7 *Republic* IV (pp. 97-125)

**F. Oct. 9 Response piece due**

M. Oct. 12 *Republic* V (pp. 127-161)  
W. Oct. 14 *Republic* VI-VII (pp. 163-220)

M. Oct. 19 *Republic* VIII-IX 576b (pp. 221-256)  
W. Oct. 21 *Republic* IX 576b through X (pp. 256-303)

**M. Oct. 26 Paper Writing Workshop: Paper 1 first draft due. (Sunday 11PM)**

W. Oct. 28 NO CLASS

### Weeks 6-7 ARISTOTLE

M. Nov. 2 *Politics* I.1-7, 12-13 (pp. 1-18, 21-25); II.1-5, 7-8 (pp. 26-36, 41-49)  
W. Nov. 4 *Politics* III (pp. 65-100)

M. Nov. 9 *Politics* IV. 1-2, 4-9, 11-12; V.1, 8, 11; VI.2, 4 (pp. 101-04, 106-17, 118-23, 134-36, 152-56, 166-71, 176-78, 179-82)

W. Nov. 11 *Politics* VII.1-4, 7, 9-10, 13-15; VIII. 1-3 (pp. 191-99, 202-3, 205-8, 212-19, 227-31)

**S. Nov. 14 Paper 1 due**

### Weeks 8-10 AQUINAS and MACHIAVELLI

M. Nov. 16 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.ii.90-95 (pp. 10-59)

W. Nov. 18 Aquinas, *ST* I.ii.96-97 (pp. 59-75); 100.1, 2, 8-9 (pp. 76-79, 81-86); 105.1 (pp. 93-96); II.ii.57.2-4 (pp. 100-105); 58.2 (pp. 107-108); 40.1 (pp. 164-167); 64.7 (pp. 169-71); 104.5-6 (pp. 182-185); 42.2 (pp. 188-189); 10.8, 11; 11.3, *Commentary on the Sentences* 44, 37 (pp. 190-196); *On Kingship* I 6 (pp. 207-210)

M. Nov. 23 *Gentiles* III.81; I.30, 40  
*ST* I.44-6; II.ii.62; II.ii.66.1-2; II.ii.94.2  
\* Genesis 1.26-28

W. Nov. 25 Machiavelli, *Prince* Dedicatory Letter, I-VIII (pp. 3-38)

M. Nov. 30 Machiavelli, *Prince* IX-XIX (pp. 38-82)

W. Dec. 2 Machiavelli, *Prince*, XX-XXXVI (pp. 83-111)

**W. Dec. 10 Paper 2 Due**

# CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

## PAPER WRITING GUIDELINES

### Marking Criteria

1. Analytical Rigor (logic, precision, clarity of argument, consideration of counterarguments, etc.)
2. Originality/Creativity
3. Essay Mechanics (structure of essay clear and logical, clear thesis, etc.)
4. Sentence Mechanics (quality of prose, grammar, spelling, etc.)
5. Scholarship (accurate representation of authors cited)
6. Miscellaneous (proper citation of sources, meets purposes of assignment, etc.)

### Explanation of Grades

Grades for papers will range from **F** to **A**. A grade in the **C** range indicates some basic problems that require immediate attention and perhaps some pedagogic help.

A **B-** is a below average grade which suggests some problem that needs attention. A **B** reflects average work; it is a respectable though perhaps unhappy grade. It indicates a need for improvement in future work. Usually there are no major errors, and there is a good, above-average comprehension of the material – though there may be problems of written expression, or of precision, or the work amounts to a mere regurgitation of texts or class discussions etc. A **B+** is a very good grade reflecting above-average and promising work. General qualities of usually include an excellent comprehension of the material, excellent organization of the paper, excellent written expression, no major errors, meeting all basic requirements of the assignment, attaining a basic level of analytical rigor, and going beyond a mere regurgitation of texts and class work.

Moving into the **A-** range requires not just comprehending the material and presenting it well, but a critical engagement with the material that captures its subtleties and displays some spark of creative originality and/or superior analytical rigor. (All of this means that an excellent paper that is also excellent because it was a ‘safe’ paper to write will probably end up with a **B+**. And, in fact, sometimes, depending on where you are at with the material, that is exactly the kind of paper you need to write.) An **A-** is an excellent grade reflecting a paper that is almost flawless in the basic requirements (excellent comprehension of material, organization of the paper, written expression, etc.); there is also a critical engagement that captures the complexities and subtleties of the material, and that displays some combination of superior analytical rigor and/or creative original insight. A grade of **A** reflects top-notch work that is flawless in the basic requirements and that reflects an outstanding comprehension of the material in all its complexities and subtleties and displays a combination of superior analytical rigor and creative original insight. The writer had likely set herself up with an intellectually challenging project (which of course sometimes carries with it some risk) and was able to pull it off.

# CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

## FURTHER TIPS

### 1. *Thesis Statement*

The paper must have a coherent thesis statement that is clearly stated in the introduction. For this class you are writing argument-style essays so you must have an argumentative thesis. An argumentative thesis is a claim about the text that can be reasonably *contested*. A thesis should not be a descriptive statement, nor should it be a summary of the text. This does not mean that your whole paper should be boiled down to a single sentence, but that all of the arguments in your paper revolve around a single point. What kind of a point should you make? You should make a point arguing something that a reader might not have gleaned from the text. For example, you might draw a connection between two different ideas in the text and argue their relationship. Once you have an argument you need to be able to state it clearly. If you can't summarise the argument of your paper yourself (try it), then do not expect anyone else to be able to do so. The test of a good thesis is to ask, "So what?" If there is no good answer to this question – if the thesis doesn't lead to any insight or if it is obviously true – then your argument, and therefore your paper, will not be very strong.

### 2. *Make an Argument*

Take a clear position on the question you are answering. You should NOT summarize the main ideas of the author's argument. Your paper should be a formal engagement with the issues raised in the texts we are reading. A list is not an argument. You need to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the author's arguments through your own examination. Objections and counterarguments to your point of view will always exist. You must discuss the most important ones and explain why such alternate interpretations are misleading, irrelevant, or at least outweighed by other evidence. It is not an argument to say, "Author XX is wrong". You need to make a claim about the author's point and explain (using textual evidence) why you think the author's arguments are not persuasive. Ideally, this process will bring the paper's thesis to a new level. Do not accuse authors of speculating, lacking logic, or simply being wrong. You must engage with their evidence and present their strengths and shortcomings. Make sure to fully explain your arguments and claims, *be as clear and explicit as possible*; do not leave the reader wondering: "Why?" or "Why not?" et cetera.

### 3. *Evidence*

Quote from the text(s) in order to support your arguments and demonstrate their relevance to the texts analyzed and to the topic chosen. The text is your primary piece of "evidence," and you need to use it in supporting whatever claims you advance. *However, do not quote just for the sake of quoting*. You should make sure that your quotations are serving the purpose of developing your thesis and arguments, and that you are using your quotations as part of your examination and analysis. In other words, you should engage in a close reading of the text(s), which means that you need to explain, unpack and open up your quotations. It is also a good idea to paraphrase the author's ideas in your papers. You must always contextualize and discuss paraphrases and quotations. The passages you quote and paraphrase from others must be properly introduced and integrated into your own argument. They are not self-evident—you have to explain them. There is a big pay-off in doing so, since in the process

## CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

of explaining these passages you are likely to discover new things about them. You also must cite authors every time you quote or paraphrase their ideas. Opinions, common knowledge, experience and the like are not suitable evidence in academic writing.

### 4. *Consider Counterarguments*

What are the potential counterarguments to your thesis? One strategy that writers use in argument-style essays is to consider objections to their argument and explain why those counterarguments are not accurate. In this way, you anticipate the possible objections, bring them up yourself, and respond to them. This can substantially strengthen your argument. Think about ways to address counterarguments in your paper. Often counterarguments are discussed in their own paragraph.

### 5. *General Structure*

A clear and coherent structure is the foundation of a good paper and therefore is an important consideration when applying grades. A solid structure will help you develop the content of your paper in the most logical and pertinent way, i.e. making sure that each paragraph in the paper exposes a new dimension of the main thesis and helps to progressively unfold the arguments related to it. Connections between paragraphs should therefore be made clear, which means that the order of the paragraphs is also important. Avoid unnecessary summaries and paraphrases. Organize your paper before you write it, or at least reorganize it once your ideas are clearer (for ex. after a first draft).

### 6. *Introductions and Conclusions*

In short papers you do not need lengthy introductions or conclusions. Do not take up too much space in the beginning or at the end of your paper discussing the vast importance of the topic at hand or the genius of the authors you are writing about. However, you do need to begin and end your paper so you should not omit them altogether. Cut to the chase. In your introduction, give your readers the thesis and the outline of your argument. You may want to include a brief overview of how you intend to develop your main point. For ex.: “I will first show X... I will then analyze Y... Finally, I will argue Z.” Your conclusion paragraph should clearly state the conclusions that have emerged from the argument you made in your paper. It should not simply repeat the points made in the introduction, but rather, offer some reflections concerning the more general implications of the paper’s thesis to the theory examined as a whole.

### 7. *Clarity is Important*

You should have a thesis statement that clearly describes what you will be arguing in your paper. Beginning your thesis, “In this paper I will argue...” may sound boring but it is clear and straightforward. It is more important to be clear and understood than stylish and misunderstood. You should also avoid long, complicated sentences. If one sentence takes up most of the paragraph it is too long, break it up. Active verbs, proper use of transitional phrases, and keeping your subject and your verb toward the beginning of your sentence all help with clarity. You will find that you are able to exercise a lot more control over your

## CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

argument if you keep your sentences relatively short, your syntax straightforward, and your diction unpretentious. Every word should be necessary; prune out redundant and superfluous words. Finally, make sure that your essay progresses from paragraph to paragraph and make the logic of your transitions as explicit as possible. Do not simply list your ideas.

### 8. *Each Paragraph Must Have a Point*

When your reader finishes reading the first part of your paragraph they should already know what the paragraph is about and how that paragraph links to the other paragraphs in the paper. Each paragraph must have a point that directly supports or argues your thesis. Each paragraph must have a minimum of four sentences. Do not create a short paragraph to explain what you will be doing next. Do what you want to do in the paragraph itself. Use the first few sentences in the paragraph to transition into the new idea of that paragraph (the point) and how it is related to the previous paragraphs.

### 9. *Do Not Be Autobiographical*

Statements like "I think X," "I believe X," and (worst of all) "I feel X" are autobiographical. They tell the reader something about you but they don't tell the reader anything about claim X.

### 10. *Avoid Generalizations*

Examples would be sentences that begin, "Since the beginning of time," "In all cultures," "In the history of," etc... Do not state something outside the scope of your own analysis.

### 12. *Use Active Voice*

Very few or no sentences were written in the passive tense by me. Active voice means that the subject performs the action expressed by the verb. Passive voice means that the subject receives the action expressed by the verb. When you are writing your papers, you should generally avoid using the passive voice. Using the passive voice can create awkward sentences and can cause your prose to seem flat and uninteresting.

### 13. *Use Formal Language*

Avoid colloquialisms (like, totally, talks about, throws for a loop, hand waiving, win-win, luckily, etc.)

### 14. *Avoid Gender-Related Language*

For example use of the term "man" instead of "people" or "humans" is not acceptable in current academic writing.

## CLASSICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Autumn Quarter 2015

15. *Read, Think, Write, Read, Think, Write, Proofread, Proofread, Proofread*

A final point to consider: A good paper takes time. If you want to write a really good paper, your first draft will never do. Be sure to reread the text you want to analyze in your paper, take notes, think it through, think about what you want to say, think about a good structure. Write. Read the text again, then read your paper. Think. Rewrite. Think more. Write. Take a break. Go over your paper and make corrections. Proofread. Go to bed and sleep. Proofread once more in the morning. Ideally you should give your paper to someone else to read – both for content/coherence and for spelling/grammar.

### FORMATTING

*Title:* you must choose a title appropriate for thesis of your paper

*Cover Page:* each paper must include a cover page indicating: the title of your paper, your name, your section, and the date of submission.

*Page Numbers:* pages must be numbered in the lower right corner

*Prompt:* the first page after the cover page must quote in full the prompt to which you are responding

*Font:* papers must be submitted in 12-point, Times New Roman or Garamond font.

*Line Spacing:* papers must be submitted in minimum 1.5 line spacing

*Citations:* References must be given as footnotes. For Plato and Aristotle, these should come in the format: Author Name, Text Name, Book Number, Line/Page Number (i.e. Plato, *Republic*, II.367e; Machiavelli, *Prince*, XXV, p. 98).