Origins of Political Thought (Winter term 2015)
POLISCI 230A/330A, CLASSICS 181/381, PHIL 276
MW 11:00AM-12:30PM. Lathrop 229.

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Course description:
Survey of the origins and development of political thought in ancient Greece, with a focus on central texts by Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle. The four central concepts of classical political thought – *justice, authority, power, and interdependence* -- have remained central in contemporary political theory, Some other concepts that were of primary interest to ancient Greek writers likewise loom large in contemporary political thought: *freedom, equality, law, and democracy*. Other issues that deeply concerned the ancients include *citizenship, dignity, civic education, civic friendship, and piety*. We will be looking at a variety of texts. Some of these are self-consciously philosophical in the contemporary sense of the term (Plato, Aristotle). Others are not (e.g. Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Demosthenes).

“Philosophy” was a contested term in the Greek world, and the boundaries between philosophy and other forms of writing that approached politics in evaluative and normative terms were not as clearly drawn in classical antiquity as in modernity. This allows us to consider the political thought exemplified in epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry, along with historiography, polemical tracts, and biography. We will be touching base throughout with later interpretations, appropriations, and contestations of the earlier Greek tradition of political thought, from Polybius, Cicero, Plutarch, and Augustine; via Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau; to Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, and Isaiah Berlin.

There are a variety of (sometimes overlapping) disciplinary/intellectual traditions engaged in the study of classical political thought. These include philosophy (Anglo-American analytic and continental), political theory (liberal, communitarian, historical, Marxist, postmodern, and Straussian), and classical/literary studies. We will be drawing from many of these interpretive traditions in the course of the term.

Student responsibilities:
- Regular attendance and class participation. **Please bring a copy of the relevant texts to each class meeting.** The course is conducted as a seminar, so your presence and active participation are essential. 20% of grade
- Weekly précis: At the start of class of Wednesday, each week (beginning in the second week) each student will turn in a 1-page (single spaced) précis summarizing key points of the week’s reading and raising one or more questions for class discussion. Exceptions: the standard précis is not required in first week, last week, or in the week in which you serve as class leader (see below). Total: seven précis’ = 20% of grade. **Due each Wednesday.**
- Class leadership: Each student is responsible for preparing an extended (5 page, double spaced) précis for one class meeting. At that meeting the student will be
expected to take an active role in leading the discussion for part of the class period. If more than one student signs up for a given day, you are expected to work out a leadership plan in advance. Leadership assignments made in 2nd week of the class. **Due on date assigned.**

- Final paper: ca. 10 pages (undergrads) - 15 pages (grads), double-spaced, potentially to be developed from class leadership session. 40% of grade. **Due on March 16.**
- Additional reading – After each week I have listed some major interpretive works. These are NOT required, but they may prove helpful to you, especially for preparing your class leadership and final paper.

**STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

*Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066).**

**Class meeting schedule**

* = text available on Coursework

**Week 1**

January 5. Introduction: Classical scholarship and its conventions. The classical tradition and origins of the western political philosophy: (e.g.) Machiavelli’s Livy, Hobbes’ Thucydides, Rousseau’s Sparta, Mills’ Athens. Contemporary approaches to classical theory: Strauss’ Plato, Popper’s Plato, Wolin’s Plato, Arendt’s Aristotle. Nussbaum and Sen’s Aristotle. **Read: Balot 1-15.**

January 7. Homer and Hesiod: Authority and justice as fairness in respect to reciprocity. **Read: *Homer, Iliad, books 1, 2, 18; *Hesiod, Works and Days (lines 1-382), Balot 16-29.** CLASS LEADERSHIP SCHEDULING.

**Week 2**


**Week 3**

Week 4

Read: *Old Oligarch = [Xenophon] *Constitution of Athens*;  
*Aristophanes, Assemblywomen*

Week 5
February 2 Thucydides. Power, modernity v tradition, collective action, civil strife.  
Read: *Thucydides books 1-3.85*. Balot 98-158.

Read: *Thucydides Books 5.63-7, Balot 156-76*.

Week 6
Read: *Plato Apology and Crito*, Balot 177-91.

Read: *Plato, Gorgias sections 447-86; Protagoras sections 309-329*, Balot 191-197. FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE.

Week 7
February 18. Plato on City and soul.  
Read: *Plato, Republic Books 1-3*, Balot 197-209.

Week 8
February 23. Plato’s Education of Guardians.  
Read: *Plato Republic Books 4-6*, Balot 210-226.

February 25. Plato’s Philosopher Kings and nonideal regimes.  
Read: *Plato Republic Books 7-10*.

Week 9
March 2. Democracy, law, and social class.  
Read: *Demosthenes, Oration 21: Against Meidias*.  
online: http://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/7876950 [pages 75-166]

Week 10
**Read: Aristotle Politics Books 6-8. Balot 247-265.**

March 11. Beyond Origins: Hellenistic, Roman, and early modern political thought in light of the Greek tradition. General discussion. **No required reading.**

**March 18: Final papers are due**

**Required textbook**

*Greek Political Thought*
by Ryan K. Balot

**(Strongly) recommended texts:**

*Aristotle: The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*
by Aristotle, Stephen Everson

*Plato Complete Works* (Hardcover)
by Plato, John M. Cooper (Editor), D. S. Hutchinson (Editor)

*The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*
by Thucydides. Robert B. Strassler (Editor)

*Aeschylus I: Oresteia* (Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides)
by Aeschylus, David Grene (Editor), Richmond Lattimore (Editor)

**(Less strongly) recommended additional reading:**


N.B. some of the required reading is NOT included in the above, and must be found either in the library, on Coursework, or on one of the Internet sites noted below.

**Surveys of classical political thought (not required, but very helpful)**
Balot, Ryan K. 2009. *A companion to Greek and Roman political thought.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. (online, see below)
Gagarin, Michael, and David Cohen (Eds.). 2005. *The Cambridge companion to ancient Greek law*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. (online, see below)


**Commentaries and Companions, handbooks:**

Major Greek authors have been studied intensely for a long time. Classical scholarship is particularly prone to the production of commentaries (e.g. Gomme et al. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*: erudite line by line comments on all manner of issues raised by the texts). “Companions” (e.g. *Cambridge Companion to Homer Plato, Socrates*) are collections of essays on various aspects of the work of a given author, intended to acquaint you with the major lines of contemporary discussion. These can be of great help in preparing for class leadership and writing final papers, and provide a good guide to the very large literature on each of the main authors we will be discussing.

Cambridge “Companions” online.
*The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Pericles*
*The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law*
*The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*
*The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*
*The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece*
*The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*
*The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle’s Politics*
*The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*
*The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*
*The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*
*The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*
*The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*
*The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*
*The Cambridge Companion to Homer*
*The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*
*The Cambridge Companion to Plato*
*The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*

Blackwell Companions online
*A Companion to Ancient History*
*A Companion to Archaic Greece*
*A Companion to Aristotle*
*A Companion to the Classical Greek World*
*A Companion to Classical Receptions*
A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds
A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography
A Companion to Greek Rhetoric
A Companion to Greek Tragedy
A Companion to the Hellenistic World
A Companion to Socrates

Oxford Reference online
The Oxford Companion to Philosophy
The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy
The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome
The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization
The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature
Who’s Who in the Classical World

Helpful web pages:
(Perseus Project; Greek and Roman collection. This site has all commonly read texts in classical Greek and Latin literature, in both English in the original. It features a variety of features, including searching, dictionaries, artifact collections. Well worth some time exploring – and a first-choice for texts you do not have in hard copy. The down side is that it is mostly set up to read texts section by section, which can be a bore if the site is receiving a lot of traffic.).

http://classics.mit.edu/index.html (MIT Classics text archive: Offers English translations, sometimes only a link to Perseus site, but often a downloadable English translation. Translations vary in quality, but are generally well chosen from works in the public domain. Just about all the literary texts you will want for this course are here.

http://www2.sfu.ca/nomoi/ (NOMOI site. Very thorough bibliography on all main topics to do with Greek law. Some are very technical, but many will be accessible to you. This is a great resource for gathering bibliography for paper-writing).

http://www.chs.harvard.edu/wb/62/wo/pZjCnC3WfFnc64vymJCnk0/7.0.0.0.19.1.7.15.1.1.0.1.2.0.0.1.3.3.1 (Center for Hellenic Discussion Series, includes a discussion on Athenian Law in Its Democratic Context. A series of introductory lectures, discussions, list of helpful web resources – great general introduction to the topic and excellent for review as we go along).

http://www.imprint.co.uk/polis/polis.html
The web site of Polis: Journal of the Society for Greek Political Thought. The only journal completely dedicated to the material covered in this course, although many other journals, e.g. Political Theory and Phronesis, regularly publish articles Greek political thought and its interpreters.
http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html

http://pm.nlx.com/xtf/view?docId=ocd/ocd.01.xml;chunk.id=div.ocd.2;toc.depth=1;toc.id =div.ocd.1;brand=default;query=

http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/uid=1392/title_home?title_id=bnp_bnp&authstatuscode=202
Brill’s New Pauly. A very reliable encyclopedia of the ancient Greek and Roman world, based on the monumental 19th century German standard work.

http://www.annee-philologique.com/aph/
L’année philologique: The standard bibliographical guide to classical studies.

http://www.agathe.gr/democracy/
The Athenian Agora Excavations site, offers a useful overview of Athenian democracy, with outstanding photos of the Agora, buildings, and other relevant artifacts.