**PS 4990 ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THEORY**

**THE WISDOM OF THE AGES OR THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY?**

Fall 2015 |Monday, Wednesday 12.30 - 1.45 pm | Bowen 160

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Office hours: Wednesday 2-3pm, Friday 2-3pm or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

“Even the history of philosophy is completely without interest if it does not undertake to awaken a dormant concept and to play it again on a new stage, even if this comes at the price of turning it against itself.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

“In a sense, in the Western tradition at least, every theory of justice has always been a rewriting of Plato’s *Republic*. Rather, I should say this: any theory of justice that is not a rewriting of *The Republic*, or that does not look for an alternate formulation of the questions it has raised, remains incomplete.” Étienne Balibar

From the vantage point of our fast-paced and technologically advanced (post?)modern societies, what can we gain from a ‘return’ to Ancient and Medieval thinkers? After all, the rise of industrial (and then post-industrial) capitalism, the development of nation-states and their subsequent reformatting under processes of globalization, and the expansion of full citizenship to traditionally excluded groups like women and the working class, not to mention the formal abolition of slavery, have placed substantial distance between the lives of Ancient and Medieval subjects and our own. Yet not only can acquaintance with these texts deepen our understanding of the Western tradition of philosophy, helping us to see how we got to where we are today. But as we read their writings, we discover that our ancient ancestors grappled with some of the same problems that continue to exercise us today, such as, What is justice? What is the best form of government? What constitutes a virtuous citizen? What is the appropriate relationship between religion, philosophy and politics? Given these shared concerns, might the distance between ‘them’ and ‘us’ in fact prove salutary, by helping us expand our political imaginations and sensibilities? Moreover, might the legacy of these ideas mean that we remain confronted with the choice of either rewriting or rejecting, but never ignoring them?

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

* To develop an understanding of foundational thinkers in the Western tradition of political thought, especially Plato and Aristotle
* To understand how the ideas and arguments developed in Ancient and Medieval political theory continue to influence contemporary politics and philosophy
* To improve speaking and listening skills through thoughtful and respectful classroom discussion
* To strengthen our command of English prose through careful reading and writing.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION**

* 2 Response papers: 20% (10% each)
* Essay 1 (Wed. 10/7): 20%
* Essay 2 (Mon. 11/23): 30%
* Final (Fri. 12/4): 20%
* Twitter Participation (weekly): 10%

 **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

* **Response papers** must be submitted on the same day as the reading to which they respond is assigned. In other words, **you may not write a response paper about a reading that we have already covered in class**. The papers must include two basic components: First, a summary of the reading’s main arguments. In this section, your goal is to provide the reader with the basic outlines of what the author says, much as you would find in a book review. Use quotations sparingly. In the second section of the response paper you should try to evaluate and analyze what you have read. Possibilities for what to write in this section include, but are not limited to: developing a critique of the argument; exploring the assumptions you think the author has made, and considering whether they seem plausible; making connections with other readings and/or themes of the class; contemplating the relevance of the text to contemporary life. You are encouraged (but are not required) to use these papers as the basis for your essays.
* The **two essays** will test reading comprehension, writing, and ability to construct a persuasive argument using the texts we will have read in class. I will circulate prompts with more detailed instructions and guidelines at least two weeks before the due date and encourage you to meet with me to discuss any ideas, questions, or problems you encounter as you write.
* **Final exam:** this will take a similar form to the in-class tests, but will be cumulative, longer, and also include some short essay questions.
* **Twitter Participation**: I am experimenting with using Twitter this term to facilitate more discussion outside the classroom, especially with your classmates. Please use the hashtag #ps4990msu in your tweets. To receive full participation credit you must tweet at least once per week during the entire course of the semester. Your tweet can take the form of a comment or a question about the assigned reading. I will not necessarily answer these questions on Twitter, but will keep a running total of your tweets and also use these questions/comments in class. For each week that you fail to tweet you will lose 1%. For each tweet in addition to the 16 required (one per week) you will receive 0.5% extra credit **provided it responds to someone else’s earlier tweet**, for a total of 5% extra credit.

**GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Graduate students must submit a response paper (following the instructions above) each week throughout the semester. They will answer the same two essay prompts as undergraduates, but are expected to write 6 and 8 pages for the two papers respectively. The weighting of assignments remains as listed above.

**STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT**

I will grade your papers, response papers and all test and exam questions that do not have a simple right or wrong answer according to the following scale. More detailed guidelines will be included with the paper prompts.

**A (100-90%):** Very good to excellent work, with few, if any, missteps.

**B (89-80%):** Good to very good work, with some missteps but also flashes of excellence.

**C (79-70%):** Satisfactory work that sincerely attempts to analyze the readings and issues at hand, but with serious flaws.

**D (69-60%):** Work attempting to engage the readings and issues at hand, but without the execution befitting an MSU student.

**F (59% or less):** Work that does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment.

**TITLE IX**

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU’s educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU’s Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to

titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at http://www.msstate.edu/web/security,

or at http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/ .

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: “As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy.

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

Students who need academic accommodations based on disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at [www.sss.msstate.edu](http://www.sss.msstate.edu)

**LATE WORK POLICY**

Please contact me as soon as you have any concerns about meeting a deadline to discuss the possibility of an extension. Papers submitted after the relevant deadline will be penalized five percentage points per day (or any part thereof), unless you are able to provide evidence of a medical or family emergency.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance for the entire duration of each and every class is mandatory. You are allowed three unexcused absences during the semester. After that, I will deduct 0.5% from your overall grade for each class that you miss. On the other hand, if you have no unexcused absences for the whole semester you will receive 5% extra credit to your overall grade.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

The following texts have been ordered at the Campus Barnes and Noble:

Plato, *Republic* (Hackett).

Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett).

Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws* (Oxford World’s Classics)

Augustine, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Aquinas, *On Law, Morality and Politics* (Hackett)

Averroes, *On Plato’s* Republic, (Cornell University Press)

De Pizan, *Selected Writings* (W.W. Norton and Company)

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| **WEEK** | **DAY**  | **ASSIGNMENT** |
| 1 | Mon. 8/17 Wed. 8/19 | Introduction to the CoursePlato, *Republic*, pp. 1-35 |
| 2 | Mon. 8/24Wed. 8/26 | Plato, *Republic*, pp. 36-65Plato, *Republic*, pp. 94-102 (410c-417b); pp. 103-135 |
| 3 | Mon. 8/31Wed. 9/2 | Plato, *Republic*, pp. 136-175Plato, *Republic*, pp. 176-215 (484a-521b)  |
| 4 | Mon. 9/7Wed. 9/9 | **Class cancelled: Labor Day** Plato, *Republic*, pp. 238-269  |
| 5 | Mon. 9/14Wed. 9/16 | Plato, *Republic*, pp. 270-296 Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 1-36  |
| 6 | Mon. 9/22Wed. 9/24 | Aristotle, *Politics,* pp. 65-91; pp. 101-116.Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 116-124; pp. 175-186, pp. 191-197, pp. 203-206, pp. 212-219; pp. 227-228 |
| 7 | Mon. 9/28Wed. 9/30 | Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*, pp. 3-34Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*, pp. 35-68 |
| 8 | Mon. 10/5Wed. 10/7 | **Class Cancelled: Fall Break****\*\* Essay 1 due at start of class today**Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*, pp. 68-94 |
| 9 | Mon. 10/12Wed. 10/14 | Augustine, *Political Writings,* Book 1: Preface, Chapters 1-2; Book 2, chapters 4, 15, 19-21; Book 4, chapter 4 and 33; Book 5, chapters 9, 11, 15-17, 19; Book 8 (chapters 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 19). Augustine, *Political Writings*, Book 12, chapters 23, 24, 27, 28; Book 13, chapters 2, 10, 14; Book 14, chapters 4-6, 10-13, 15-16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 28; Book 18, chapters 37, 39, 41 |
| 10 | Mon. 10/19Wed. 10/21 | Augustine, *Political Writings* Book 19, chapters 1-2, 4, 12, 13, 15-17, 19, 21, 23; Book 22, chapters 27, 29, 30; Property; The Status of WomenAverroes, *On Plato’s* Republic, pp. 3-53 |
| 11 | Mon. 10/26Wed. 10/28 | Averroes, *On Plato’s* Republic, pp. 54-91Averroes, *On Plato’s* Republic, pp. 92-149 |
| 12 | Mon. 11/2Wed. 11/4 | Aquinas, *On Law, Morality and Politics*, Questions 90-92Aquinas, *On Law, Morality and Politics* Questions 93-95 |
| 13 | Mon. 11/9Wed. 11/11 | Aquinas, *On Law, Morality and Politics*, Questions 96-97, 57Aquinas, *On Law, Morality and Politics*, Questions 58 and 61 |
| 14 | Mon. 11/16Wed. 11/18 | Christine de Pizan, *Selected Writings* pp. 41-5, 59-87 Christine de Pizan, *Selected Writings*, 88-109, 116-141 |
| 15 | Mon. 11/23. Wed. 11/25 | **\*\* Essay 2 due at start of class today**Christine de Pizan, *Selected Writings*, pp. 141-155, 201-216, **Class Cancelled: Thanksgiving Holiday** |
| 16 | Mon. 11/30Wed. 12/2Fri. 12/4 | Christine de Pizan, *Selected Writings*, pp.229-248, 252-262**Class Cancelled: Reading Day****Final Exam:** 12-3 PM |
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