

POLI 13: Power and Justice

Introduction to Political Theory

Summer Session II, 2018, UC San Diego
Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 4:50 PM

Instructor: Ike Sharpless

(Office Hours: Wednesdays from 1-3 PM, at pthe Price Center outside of the Loft)

Grader: Yile Zhang

contacts

Ike Sharpless: isharple@ucsd.edu

Yile Zhang: yiz871@ucsd.edu

Outline of course content: This course looks in sequence at different moments in history as a way to introduce some of the central themes and concepts that have influenced the history of Western political theory: . After a preliminary look at Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* and Weber's *Politics as a Vocation*, we turn back to Greek antiquity, with Platonic idealism, justice as the virtue of the soul, the Socratic method, and Aristotle's response to Plato. Then we move forward two millennia to Florence around 1500, a tumultuous and violent time and place that produces Machiavelli's blunt descriptions of how power and political leadership work in different regimes at different times, but also his account of the particular benefits of the Roman model of politics over its various competitors at the time. On, next, to the England of John Stuart Mill's 1859 *On Liberty*, which sets out an argument for freedom of thought and speech with which we are still grappling today. The course closes by taking a quick glance at a non-exhaustive set of topics that our focus on Plato, Machiavelli, and Mill otherwise obscures: communism, conservatism, anarchism, and black nationalism.

Required texts:

- Plato, *Republic* (Grube and Reeve, 2nd ed.), 9780872201361 (ISBN)
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writing* (ed. Wootton), 9780872202474 (ISBN)
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (ed. Rappaport), 9780915144433 (ISBN)

Course objectives:

- Learning to carefully, critically, and sympathetically read classical primary texts
 - A note on reading and receptivity to classic texts: I want you to try to be friends with these authors and their texts, not just to focus on what's wrong with them viewed from the perspective of the here and now— in 2018 and at UCSD—because then you won't be able to properly get to know them first
- Thinking creatively about important ideas that have shaped much of the way we now look at the world, and trying to understand how the ancient way of looking at the world is or is not different from our own
- Have a systematically better understanding of the relation between power and justice than you did prior to the course, both at different moments in history and, hopefully, in your own life

Course expectations: You can expect the following from me. I will: treat you with respect; respond to any queries as promptly as possible; come to class each day prepared to discuss the material; provide

any knowledge and guidance I can in office hours or during discussion; supervise the grading of your work and comment on your online contributions as fairly as I can and with attention to how you can improve as a writer and a thinker; and provide an online atmosphere in supplement to lecture and section of questions and resources linking our class material to contemporary and historical events and patterns. In response, I expect you to: treat each other with respect; read the syllabus carefully; come to class each day having done the required reading and ready to participate; and to commit to the spirit of common inquiry by engaging with the online discussion community in the way outlined below.

GRADING

- **Two short (2 full pages) papers (40% total)**
 - See the comment on the longer paper below for details on drafting and editing. These papers, like the final, will be drawn from two to three questions distributed a week in advance. The first short paper will be on books I, II, VI, VII, and VIII of Plato's Republic, and/or Aristotle's *Politics*. The second short paper will have a part on Machiavelli and a part on Mill.
 - To prepare well for these arguments, read the books closely and take notes as you go as they relate to the themes presented in this syllabus
 - Late papers docked a 1 out of 20 points per calendar day
- **7 discussion board questions (25% total, 5% each, with the lowest two dropped)**
 - Each of these discussion thread responses will be due by an hour before (so, 1 PM) the relevant lecture, and should cover the upcoming reading
 - There will be one of these for all but the first and last classes
 - To get full credit, your comment should contain at least two full paragraphs and should be a mix of reading notes and discussion questions
 - You are also welcome to provide links or comparisons with other current or historical events, so long as your posted questions demonstrate that you are engaging with the content of the reading and lecture to date (engagement with the current PBS News Hour or *The Economist* is encouraged).
- **One slightly longer (3 full pages) paper (30% total)**
 - Grading for this paper – and for the shorter ones above – will focus on whether you are attempting to *edit* your work and to write something concise and clear, which is in fact considerably more difficult than writing something longer but less coherent. Work on cutting out qualifiers you don't need, as well as things that are 'fluff' or filler that are not really on-prompt, and redundant phrases or sentences that add nothing specific in terms either of analysis or illustration.
 - Have an argument, defend your argument with evidence, and illustrate support or falsification for your argument with argument with examples drawn from our text and the PBS News Hour running throughout August and September 2018.
 - Again, because the three short papers assigned are relatively short, the focus is on style and structure as well as substance, with an emphasis on quality over quantity.
- **Attendance: required (a 3% grade penalty for each unexcused absence)**
- **Participation: 5%**

A note on plagiarism and citations. Regarding plagiarism: don't do it. Penalties are severe and you are likely to get caught by Turnitin. And if in doubt, see the school guidelines for what it is. Cite your sources – it's often, and at this stage usually, better to cite without quoting, as a way to show your reader that you're in direct discussion with the text.

Outline of Lectures

1. Tuesday, August 7. Viktor Frankl, “Man's Search for Meaning.” (attached as a pdf. Read at least pp. 7-44); Introductory lecture on the nature of power and its relation to justice

- What is power? Can justice be thought of as what distinguishes its legitimate from illegitimate uses?
- Plato's metaphor of the body politic
- Machiavelli, Weber, the statesman, and the question of dirty hands
- Managing the realm of appearances – frame analysis and the masks we wear
- Mill on social tyranny, living truth, and dead dogma

part one: ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics. political science, human understanding, and the life of action

2. Thursday, August 9. Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (shortened version, 15 pages, to be provided as a pdf on TritonEd. Skip headers 33-43, or part of page 8 through page 11); Plato, *Republic*, books I and II (pp. 1-59)

3. Tuesday, August 14. Plato, *Republic*, end of book VI and beginning of book VII (on the divided line and the allegory of the cave – top of 179 to the bottom of 197, or: 505c4-525c3); also book VIII (pp. 213-240)

4. Thursday, August 16. Aristotle, *Politics*. [to be provided on TritonEd] Assigned books and chapters subject to minor changes, but tentatively to include the following sections: I (entire), II: 1-5, III, 1-10, IV: 1, V: 1, 2; VII, 1-3, VIII, 1-3

part two: history, political memory, and perspective: managing the realm of appearances

5. Tuesday, August 21. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Letter to Vettori* (1-4) and the entirety of *The Prince* (5-80 in Wootton)

First short paper due

6. Thursday, August 23. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, selected chapters from Books I through III (this spans 81-216 in Wootton book, so: the following sections are required. Book I: Preface and chapters 1-12 (pp. 81-116), chapters 55 and 58 (pp. 150-158); Book II :chapters 1-3 (pp. 161-170), and chapters 27 and 29 (182-188) Book III: chapters 1, 3, 7-9 (pp. 189-199) and chapters 31, 34, 41, and 43 (pp. 205-217)

***part three: on the domain and limitability of freedom of thought, speech, and action.
or: is social tyranny really worse than traditional tyranny?***

7. Tuesday, August 28. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, parts I and II, including the editor's introduction (vii-52)

8. Thursday, August 30. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, parts III through V (53-113)
Second short paper due

part four: A grab bag of what we are not covering in this class. (a 'grab bag' because this choice of four texts itself excluding critique from many angles: that of race, but also the feminist, postcolonial, animal, and ecological, at the least.)

9. Tuesday, September 4. A radical and some conservatives go into a bar. Karl Marx, Part I of *The German Ideology* (on Feuerbach and historicist materialism [to be provided as a pdf, pp. 4-15]; Parts I, II, and IV of *The Communist Manifesto* [also to be provided]. Also: Michael Oakeshott, "On Being Conservative" [ditto, a pdf], and [this](#) interview of John McWhorter by Heterodox Academy.

10. Thursday, September 6. Democracy, the State, and the Rights of Individuals and Communities. Emma Goldman, *Anarchy: What it Really Stands for* (chapters 1, 4, and 5); Malcolm X, "[The Ballot or the Bullet](#)" (as a [speech](#))

Third, slightly longer, paper due at finals time, September 8 by 6 PM.