Instructor: Manu Samnotra  
Office Location: Anderson Hall, room 321  
Office Hours: M 12:45pm – 1:45pm, W 12:45 – 1:45pm (and by appointment)  
e-mail: msamnotra@ufl.edu

Course Description
This course is designed to introduce students to Ancient political thought. This means we will read texts by Thucydides, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Cicero, and St. Augustine. Besides offering a window into a world very different from our own, these texts also offer lucid treatments of issues that continue to shape our world. We find that we are at once in the company of authors and ideas that belong to antiquity, and are offered analyses that illuminate our own contemporary condition. Our challenge this semester is to experience the simultaneous strangeness and familiarity of these texts by bringing them into conversation with contemporary political issues. We will investigate what the ancients can tell us about, for instance, the relationship between technological advancements and political activity. Is the increased availability of social media platforms a boon for democracy? Under what conditions can custom and law interact to create political harmony? Which personal characteristics and virtues make political action ethical and efficacious? How does power shape relationships between individuals and political bodies? We will seek to answer these questions by reading ancient political thinkers alongside contemporary theorists and writers, such as Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Christina Tarnopolsky, Joydeep Bhattacharya, and others. Students are also encouraged to bring other items of contemporary relevance into conversation with these texts.

Required Texts
1) Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition  
2) Sophocles, Antigone, Oedipus the King, Electra  
3) Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya, The Watch  
4) Plato, The Republic of Plato  
5) Plato, Gorgias  
6) Aristotle, The Politics  
7) Cicero, On Duties

** All additional required readings are open-access and are available online. I will provide the links to these texts in class.

Evaluation: 50% of your grade will come from two take-home essays (each worth 25%; essays should be 5-6 pages long) due on Monday, September 20th and Friday, November 1st respectively. 30% of your grade will come from a comprehensive take-home essay (8 pages long) with a due date yet to be decided. I will provide more details about essay topics and how to write the papers in class. 10% of your grade will come from coming to class consistently prepared and willing to participate in class discussion. The final 10% of your grade depends on submitting weekly discussion questions. I will clarify this aspect of the grade in class. An “entry paper” is also required but not graded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First essay</th>
<th>Friday, September 20th</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second essay</td>
<td>Friday, November 1st</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third essay</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Entry” paper</td>
<td>Friday, August 30th</td>
<td>required but not graded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**E-mail:** I will be sending reminders about upcoming readings and other relevant course materials via e-mail. Please be sure to check your UF webmail account regularly.

**Readings:** On average, we will read approximately 100 pages per week. We will alternate between weeks with a heavier reading load and weeks where the reading load will be less substantial. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the readings *in advance* of the class session for which they have been assigned. It is essential that you keep up with the material for this course. Falling behind on the readings will make it difficult for you to participate in class discussions, follow the lectures, and write the essays. On the other hand, if you make a commitment to read consistently throughout the semester you will have no difficulty with the course, and you might be surprised by what you can learn from the texts.

**Class Format:** Since this is an upper-division class in political theory, I expect that the frequency and quality of participation will be of a high standard. I will treat you as my colleagues and, in this capacity, I expect that you will share your questions and opinions with the class. My aim as the instructor is to offer historical and theoretical background to the texts (where needed). Beyond that, I will offer guidance based on what YOU bring to the class.

**Policy on Academic Integrity:** All students are required to abide by the University of Florida’s Academic Honesty Guidelines. Among other things, this means that cheating on essays and exams is totally unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of portraying as your own the words or ideas of other people. If you are unsure what plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are you should consult with me (sooner rather than later), and/or visit [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php)

**Accommodations:** Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please come see me as soon as possible regarding this matter.

**Please note:** I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time depending on our needs.

***

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: The Wounds of Modernity and the Ancients’ Salve**

**Wednesday, August 21:** Introduction, etcetera.

**Friday, August 23:** Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 1 – 37.
Week 2: Defending the Private | Contesting the Public


Wednesday, August 28: Sophocles, *Antigone* (Complete).

Friday, August 30: Sophocles, Continued.

Week 3: Thinking outside the Polis I

Monday, September 2: **** NO CLASS. Labor Day ****


Week 4: Thinking outside the Polis II


*** First Essay Question Handed Out ***

Week 5: A City in Speech I


*** First Essay Due ***

Week 6: A City in Speech II


Week 7: Better to Suffer?

Monday, September 30: Plato, *Gorgias*, TBA

Wednesday, October 2: Plato, *Gorgias*, TBA


Week 8: Discovering *Thumos*; Practicing *Parrhesia*


Wednesday, October 9: Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, pp 75 – 133.


Week 9: Understanding the Virtues


Friday, October 18: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VI and VIII (pp TBA).

Week 10: Living the Virtues


*** Second Essay Question Handed Out ***

Week 11: The Roman Adaptation


*** Second Paper Due ***
Week 12: Looking Elsewhere for Virtue I

Monday, November 4: Confucius, *Analects*, pp TBA.

Wednesday, November 6: Confucius, *Analects*, pp TBA

Friday, November 8: **** NO CLASS. Homecoming ****

Week 13: Looking elsewhere for Virtue II | From Virtue to Faith I

Monday November 11: **** NO CLASS. Homecoming ****

Wednesday, November 13: Secondary readings on Aristotle and Confucius (TBA).

Friday, November 15: Augustine, Selections from *Confessions* and *City of God*, pp TBA.

Week 14: From Virtue to Faith II | Remembering Action

Monday, November 18: Augustine, Selections from *Confessions* and *City of God*, pp TBA.


Week 15: The Loss of the World I


Wednesday, November 27: **** NO CLASS. Thanksgiving ****

Friday, November 29: **** NO CLASS. Thanksgiving ****

Week 16: The Loss of the World II


Wednesday, December 4: Discussion and Review

**** Classes End ****

**** Final Paper Due ****

**** Final Grades Due – December 16th ****