

**GREAT POLITICAL THINKERS 1**  
**POT4013, Section 122G**  
Fall 2013, MWF 5<sup>th</sup> period, FAC 0127

Instructor: Manu Samnotra  
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Office Hours: M 12:45pm – 1:45pm, W 12:45 – 1:45pm (and by appointment)  
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**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 20<sup>th</sup>** and **Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>** 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.

<b>First essay</b>	Friday, September 20 <sup>th</sup>	25%
<b>Second essay</b>	Friday, November 1 <sup>st</sup>	25%

<b>Third essay</b>	TBA	30%
<b>Attendance/participation</b>	-----	10%
<b>Discussion Questions</b>	Weekly	10%
<b>“Entry” paper</b>	Friday, August 30 <sup>th</sup>	required but not graded

**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>

**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.

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### 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**

Monday, August 26: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 38 – 78.

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 \*\*\*\*

Wednesday, September 4: Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*, pp 3 – 30, 57 – 90.

Friday, September 6: Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*, pp 91 – 120.

## **Week 4: Thinking outside the *Polis* II**

Monday, September 9: Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*, pp 155 – 201.

Wednesday, September 11: Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*, pp 239 – 279.

Friday, September 13: Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”, “The Melian Dialogue”.

**\*\*\* First Essay Question Handed Out \*\*\***

## **Week 5: A City in Speech I**

Monday, September 16: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 1 – 40.

Wednesday, September 18: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 41 – 66.

Friday, September 20: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 67 – 102.

**\*\*\* First Essay Due \*\*\***

## **Week 6: A City in Speech II**

Monday, September 23: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 102 – 174.

Wednesday, September 25: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 175 – 235.

Friday, September 27: Plato, *The Republic*, pp 264 – 320.

### **Week 7: Better to Suffer?**

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

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

Friday, October 4: Tarnopolsky, Christina. 2004. "Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato and the Contemporary Politics of Shame". *Political Theory*. 32 (4): 468-494.

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

Monday, October 7: Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, pp 9 – 24.

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

Friday, October 11: Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, pp 133 – 173.

### **Week 9: Understanding the Virtues**

Monday, October 14: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I and II (pp TBA).

Wednesday, October 16: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III and V (pp TBA).

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

### **Week 10: Living the Virtues**

Monday, October 21: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book I, complete; Book II, Chapters 1 – 6 (pp TBA).

Wednesday, October 23: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book III, Chapters 1 – 13; Book IV, Chapters 1 – 13 (pp TBA).

Friday, October 25: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book VII, Complete (pp TBA).

**\*\*\* Second Essay Question Handed Out \*\*\***

### **Week 11: The Roman Adaptation**

Monday, October 28: Cicero, *On Duties*, pp 1 – 49.

Wednesday, October 30: Cicero, *On Duties*, pp 50 – 100.

Friday, November 1: Cicero, *On Duties*, pp 101 – 147.

**\*\*\* 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.

Wednesday, November 20: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 175 – 212.

Friday, November 22: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 212 – 247.

**Week 15: The Loss of the World I**

Monday, November 25: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 248 – 280.

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

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

**Week 16: The Loss of the World II**

Monday, December 2: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp 280 – 325.

Wednesday, December 4: Discussion and Review

\*\*\*\* Classes End \*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* Final Paper Due \*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* Final Grades Due – December 16<sup>th</sup> \*\*\*\*