

POT6016 - Ancient Political Thought

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Ancient Political Thought POT 6016

Wednesday, 11:45-2:45

Professor Thiele

Poli Sci Conference Room

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:45-4:45

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Anderson Hall 302

[www.clas.ufl.edu/users/thiele/Links to an external site.](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/thiele/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.)

Seminar description:

This seminar investigates the political life and thought of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The foundations for modern western political theories and institutions were set in place by Greek and Roman philosophers and statespeople exploring the eternally troubling relationships between power and justice, freedom and obligation, democracy and tyranny, the individual and the community. These issues still animate the study of political thought today. Our task is to examine the achievements of these early theorists, interrogate their conclusions, and appreciate how and why their works continue to speak to us today, after two and a half millennia. Intensive reading of texts and the development of interpretive skills are emphasized.

Required texts:

Sophocles, *Antigone, Oedipus the King, Electra* (Oxford)

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Penguin)

Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates* (Cornell)

Plato, *Republic* (Basic Books, 2nd edition)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford)

Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens* (Cambridge)

Epictetus, *The Art of Living* (Harper)

Marcus Aurelius, *The Emperor's Handbook* (Scribner)

Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton)

Seminar requirements and grading:

1. A seminar paper of 6500-7500 words (inclusive of text, notes, and bibliography) is due by midnight on Friday, December 6. Late papers without exception will be penalized 1/2 letter grade for each day late. Your paper topic must be approved by Professor Thiele prior to your prospectus presentation in seminar, and it is highly recommended that you discuss your proposed topic with

him by mid-semester. The paper is worth 50% of your final grade. Consult the writing guide below.

2. One seminar presentation based on the weekly readings. The presentation is to be emailed to all seminar participants, including Professor Thiele, by noon of the Monday preceding the seminar. Late submissions will be penalized 1/2 letter grade. Written presentations should consist of three components:

a) A brief biographical sketch of the author followed by a single-spaced, one-page synopsis of the weekly reading.

b) A single-spaced page consisting of 3 paragraphs, with each paragraph posing a single question that is grounded in a critical assessment of the reading(s). You should think of each of your questions as the sort that would appear on an excellent essay exam. It should prompt a clear argument in favor of a specific assertion or claim related to the reading, and guide the respondent to be attentive to the textual context, theoretical import, and practical significance of the argument being made.

c) A single-spaced, 2-3 page answer to one of the questions.

You will have 20-25 minute for your oral presentation. At 25 minutes, you will be asked to stop your presentation regardless of your progress. Briefly summarize your biographical sketch and synopsis in 3-5 minutes. Then employ the rest of your time to present your argument. Clearly state your thesis (what is it that you are attempting to prove or assert), present the textual evidence for it, interpret this evidence, provide a brief counterargument to your thesis, and respond to this counterargument. Do NOT read your written submission verbatim. Rather, speak to your classmates, employing a written outline of your argument as a reference. Your presentation is worth 20% of the final grad.

3. A 10-minute response to a presentation. Your response should (1) critically evaluate the presentation, underlining its strengths and weaknesses and (2) address one of the questions left unanswered by the presenter. Do NOT read your response. You are to compose a written outline of your response, a copy of which you may employ as an aid for your oral response and a copy of which you submit to Dr. Thiele at the beginning of the seminar. Your oral response is worth 10% of the final grade.
4. A 10-minute oral presentation of your seminar paper prospectus, followed by Q&A. Students will email a 250-300 word abstract of their seminar paper and a complete bibliography to all seminar participants, including Professor Thiele, by noon of the Monday preceding the seminar. In your presentation, do NOT read verbatim from your abstract and notes. Your prospectus presentation should provide a summary of your paper's central argument, the resources you will use to substantiate it, a reasonable counterargument, and your response to the counterargument. The abstract, presentation, and Q&A response is worth 10% of your final grade.
5. Seminar Participation. The quality of a graduate seminar is largely determined by the diligence and thoroughness with which participants read and critically reflect upon the assigned texts, and their attentiveness and full engagement in class. Students should be consistently well prepared to discuss the weekly readings in an informed and articulate manner. It will not be possible for you to receive an A in this seminar unless you have completed the readings each week and participated energetically in seminar discussions. Participation will count for 10% of the final grade.

Grading Scale:

A	100-93%	C	< 77 – 73%
A-	< 93-90%	C-	< 73 – 70%
B+	< 90– 87%	D+	< 70 – 67%
B	< 87– 83%	D	< 67 – 63%
B-	< 83 – 80%	D-	< 63 – 60%
C+	< 80 – 77%	E	< 60 %

Honor Code - Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. All students are required to abide by [UF's Honor CodeLinks to an external site.](#). An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Plagiarism in presentations or term papers will result in failure of the course.

Students requesting classroom accommodation for disabilities must provide documentation from the [Disability Resource CenterLinks to an external site.](#).

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via [GatorEvalsLinks to an external site.](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can access [evaluation resultsLinks to an external site.](#).

Seminar schedule:

August

24 Introduction to seminar; scheduling of presentations

31 Sophocles, *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, *Electra*

Presenters:

Respondents:

September

7 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bks 1-4

Presenters:

Respondents:

14 No seminar: Prof. Thiele at APSA meeting in Montreal

21 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bks 5-8
Presenters: Respondents:

28 Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*
Presenters: Respondents:

October

5 Plato, *Republic*, Books I-V, and section of Bloom's essay
Presenters: Respondents:

12 Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-X, and section of Bloom's essay
Presenters: Respondents:

19 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Presenters: Respondents:

26 Aristotle, *The Politics*
Presenters: Respondents:

November

2 Epictetus, *The Art of Living*
Presenters: Respondents:

9 Marcus Aurelius, *The Emperor's Handbook*
Presenters: *Respondents:*

16 Term paper prospectus presentations:

30 Term paper prospectus presentations:

December

7 Term Paper Troubleshooting

How to write an seminar paper

1. Read the literature. Thoroughly work through into the primary literature and review a sizable portion of the secondary literature to understand the issues and debates, to stimulate your thinking, and to make sure that you are not about to reinvent the wheel.

A partial list of journals that regularly publish political theory includes: *Political Theory*, *American Political Science Review*, *Polity*, *Contemporary Political Theory*, *History of Political Thought*, *Ethics*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *Review of Politics*, *Constellations*, *Perspectives*, *Social Research*, *Environmental Ethics*, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *European Journal of Political Theory*, *Theoria*, *The Critical Review*, *Social Text*, *Telos*, *Inquiry*, *Daedalus*, *Common Knowledge*, *Millennium*, *Hypatia*, *Politics and Society*, *Theory*, *Culture and Society*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *Philosophy Today*, *Man and World*, *Signs*, *Dissent*.

2. Formulate a clear thesis. What is your central claim, and how you will systematically defend it. Plan every step, but continually revise.

3. Write an introduction that lays out your basic thesis. It is often best to begin by clearly articulating a question/problem/puzzle that resists an easy solution. Now indicate why the available solutions fall short of the mark and how your approach constitutes an improvement. State what you hope to achieve in the paper and how you will achieve it. Do not beat around the bush; get right to the point. Do not overstate your case. You are not creating the Grand Unified Theory of Everything; you are inserting a very small stone in the edifice of knowledge.

4. Write the body of the paper. Employ a well-reasoned, well-organized argument: forbid tangents. Define all but the most unambiguous terms and concepts, but shy away from dictionary definitions. Avoid general, vague or universal statements: be clear, precise and concise. Offer well-integrated textual support or empirical evidence for all your claims. Introduce and explain quotations, and be sparing in their use. Employ concrete examples regularly to illustrate your conceptual claims. Use section headings and employ proper citations (MLA style recommended).

5. Write a strong conclusion. Explain briefly what you have demonstrated and its significance. Do not introduce wholly novel material, but approach the problem and solution from a new angle that illuminates its importance and leaves a lasting impression.

6. Attach a list of references.

7. Do a spell-check and make sure your pages are numbered.

8. Forget about the paper for 3-4 days. Now re-read it and revise thoroughly.

9. Send the revised paper to a colleague for review. Revise again.

10. Keep revising. Do not submit your paper until each paragraph propels the thesis forward, each sentence does its job clearly and efficiently, and each word proves indispensable.

On substance and style:

Steer clear of jargon, explain your terminology, document your assertions, and craft well-organized arguments. Strive for simplicity, but shun the simplistic. Less is generally more. Avoid awkward, baggy, convoluted and run-on sentences. At the same time, monotony dulls the wits, and lets the reader's mind wander. Style impacts substance. Gary Provost illustrates this beautifully:

“This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It’s like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy & builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important. So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader’s ear. Don’t just write words. Write music.”

2008) -Gary Provost, *Writing Tools* (Little Brown,

Useful reference books on writing:

- Turabian, *A Manual for Writers or Chicago Manual of Style*
- Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*
- Scott and Garrison, *The Political Science Student Writer’s Manual*
- Diane E. Schmidt, *Writing in Political Science*
- Cook, *Line by Line* or Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*
- Fowler, *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* or W. Follett, *Modern American Usage*
- Gary Provost, *Writing Tools*

Food for thought:

But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?

James Madison

**Tiger got to hunt, bird got to fly;
Man got to sit and wonder 'why, why, why?'
Tiger got to sleep, bird got to land;
Man got to tell himself he understand.**

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat’s Cradle*

Secondary readings:

1. Adkins, Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece

2. Adkins, Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome
3. Aurelius, Meditations (The Emperor's Handbook)
4. Barker, The Politics of Plato and Aristotle
5. Bernal, Black Athena
6. Bowra, The Greek Experience
7. Bloom, The Republic of Plato, "Interpretive essay"
8. Butler, Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death
9. Cartledge, The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Other
10. Connor, The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens
11. Cornford, Before and After Socrates; Thucydides: Mythistoricus
12. J.K. Davies, Democracy and Ancient Greece
13. Davis, The politics of philosophy
14. E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational
15. Dover, Aristophanic Comedy
16. pictetus, The Enchiridion
17. Euben, The Tragedy of Political Theory; Corrupting Youth
18. Euben, J. Ober and J. Wallach, eds., Educating Democracy
19. Finley, The Ancient Greeks, Politics in the Ancient World; Thucydides
20. Forde, The Ambition to Rule
21. Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
22. Gomme, A Historical Commentary on Thucydides
23. Gompers, Greek Thinking
24. Grant, Myths of the Greeks and Romans; The World of Rome
25. Grene, Greek Political Theory
26. Hadas, A History of Greek Literature; A History of Rome
27. Hamilton, The Greek Way
28. Howland, The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy
29. Hussey, The Pre-Socratics

30. Kraut, Socrates and the State
31. Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory; Classical Thought
32. Jaeger, Paideia
33. Kitto, The Greeks
34. E. Lendon, Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World
35. Nahm Selections from Early Greek Philosophy
36. Meier, The Greek Discovery of Politics
37. Millar, The Roman Republic in Political Thought
38. Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements
39. Nichols Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics
40. Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness
41. Ober, Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens
42. Patterson, Freedom: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture
43. Plutarch, Fall of the Roman Republic: Six Lives
44. Rahe, Republics, Ancient and Modern
45. de Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism
46. Rorty (ed.), Essays on Aristotle's Ethics
47. Segal, ed. Greek Tragedy
48. Sabine, A History of Political Theory, Chs. 1-6
49. Saxonhouse, Fear of Diversity
50. Sealy, The Athenian Republic
51. Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought; Democracy and Participation in Athens
52. Snell, The Discovery of the Mind
53. Stockton, The Classical Athenian Democracy (Oxford)
54. Stone, The Trial of Socrates
55. Strauss, What is Political Philosophy?, Natural Right and History; The City and Man
56. Vernant, Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece; The Origins of Greek Thought
57. Voegelin, Order and History: Vol. 2

58. Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher

59. Williams, Shame and Necessity

60. Wolin, Politics and Vision, Ch. 1-3