Introduction to Political Thinking
PS 115
Olin 202
T/TH 10:30-11:50
Spring 2010

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Introduction to Political Thinking

From Plato to Nietzsche, great thinkers in the Western tradition have asked about the nature and practice of political action. Thinking about politics is, knowingly or not, conducted against the background of this shared tradition. This is no less true of political thought that aims to break away from “the classics” than of political thought that finds in them a constant resource for both critical and constructive thinking. This course explores fundamental questions of politics through a core body of writings. At its center (about 7 weeks of a 14 week semester) will be a sustained and close reading of Plato’s Republic. Thinking with Plato and also with complementary texts, we reflect upon key political concepts such as justice, democracy, authority, and “the political.” We also explore such enduring questions as the relationship between the state and the individual; the conditions for peaceful political order; and the connection between morality and politics. This course is required for all political studies majors.

Reading and Preparation
This class is an introduction to political thought. The texts will be difficult, and we will proceed slowly. You are required and expected to attend every class meeting and to be prepared. Reading the texts is only the bare minimum preparation, and is, on its own, not sufficient. While I will lecture for part of every class, you are expected to ask questions and participate in discussions. The format requires that you not only read, but also engage with these texts before you come to class.
Participation
You are expected to engage actively in the readings and the class discussions. You will be evaluated on your classroom participation.

Lateness
As a matter of respect for your fellow students, you are to arrive on time.

Assignments
There will be two exams. One on March 11th. The second will be a take home exam on, May 18th.

You will also be expected to write a series of approximately 4 short papers, usually between 1-3 pages.

Finally, every class member is required to take responsibility for preparing and presenting the reading for two classes. You will work with one other person and meet before class to discuss the assigned material. You will then, individually, write a short expository essay (no more than 400 words) stating the main argument of the reading. This essay is to be handed in at the end of class and will be graded. On the days you are “on call,” you will be expected to contribute to the class discussion.

Books
Please buy and read the following books in the specified edition.
   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist* (Penguin)
   Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (Penguin)
   Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Allan Bloom (Basic Books)
   Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience* (Dover or any edition)
   Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures* (Hackett)
   J. J. Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality* (Penguin or any edition)

Greek
You are to familiarize yourself with the Greek alphabet. There is a sheet of the Greek alphabet available for you on Reserve Web.
I. Class One
   Introduction. What is Political Philosophy?

II. Weeks One and Two:
   The Athenian Polis and the Concord Woods
   Sophocles: Ode to Man (Reserve Web)
   Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience.

   Robert Richardson, Henry David Thoreau: The Life of the Mind.

III. Weeks Three and Four
   The Problem of Socrates
   Plato’s The Apology
   Plato’s, The Crito
   Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Problem of Socrates”

   “Socrates the Teacher” in the book Paideia, by Werner Jaeger. It is in Volume 2.
   Leo Strauss, “On Plato’s Apology of Socrates and Crito.” In “Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy” by Leo Strauss
   Shinro Kato, “The Apology: The Beginning of Plato’s Own Philosophy”.
   Hannah Arendt, “Socrates,” The Promise of Politics.
   Michael Zuckert, Rationalism & Political Responsibility: Just Speech & Just Deed in the "Clouds" & the "Apology" of Socrates
   Socrates in Plato and Aristophanes: In Memory of Ludwig Edelstein (1902-1965)
   Harry Neumann
IV.  Weeks Five through Twelve: 
Politics, Thinking, and Paideia 
Plato’s Republic

Garland, Robert, The Piraeus: from the fifth to the first century B.C. 1987

Rhetoric and the Ring: Herodotus and Plato on the Story of Gyges as a Politically Expendient Tale
Gabriel Danzig
John Kayser’s “Prologue to the Study of Justice: Republic”.


Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-362X%2819520911%2949%3A19%3C607%3AOAJABU%3E2.0.CO%3B2-4

http://www.jstor.org/pss/3234454
Plato's "Republic" and Feminism
Author(s): Julia Annas
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3749607

Plato's Feminism
Harry Lesser
Source: Philosophy, Vol. 54, No. 207 (Jan., 1979), pp. 113-117
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3750199

Dobbs, Darrell, Choosing Justice.
here is an article. It concerns the dividing line at the end of book 6. I want you to do three things.

1) give a short account of the divided line in Plato's text.

2) Outline the different interpretations of Ekasia that the article offers.

3) Present the argument of the article regarding Ekasia.

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0073-0688%281933%29244%3C193%3ATMOEIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q
V. Week Thirteen
Political Science: Materialism and Idealism
Karl Marx: *On the Jewish Question* (Reserve Web)
Jean Jacques Rousseau: *Discourse on Inequality*

VI. Week Fourteen:
The Critique of Political Science
Max Weber: Politics as a Vocation