

Govt405

History of Political Theory

1. Course Number and Name: Govt405, History of Political Theory

Prerequisites: Credits 3

2. Course Description: Govt405, History of Political Theory, introduces students to the vast sweep of political philosophy from its origins in ancient Greece through modern developments represented in the works of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

As such the course offers a survey of the development of political philosophy including the early origins of political discourse in myths and artifacts that we may trace as far back as ancient Anatolia, merely 40,000BP ("Before The Present", in the chronology of carbon dating); some information about the symbolic order of the ancient Near East; the consciousness of revelation and history of ancient Israel; the early Greek poetic and philosophical contributions to political philosophy that preceded the work of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; and, of course, the political philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine and the Modern political philosophers.

3. Course Goals: To equip students with the basic concepts of political philosophy from its origins in the inquiries of the Greek natural philosophers through the modern concepts of order of the Social Contract theorists.

4. Course Learning Outcomes: Students taking Govt405 will:

- 1) Explain how man experienced the cosmos through myth
- 2) Explain how mythic order is different than the political order of Classical philosophy
- 3) Contrast Plato's 'theology' to the Homeric tales of the gods.
- 4) Discuss the new truth about God discussed by Plato and examined by Aristotle
- 5) Relate the discovery of the soul to the new truth about God
- 6) Discuss the anthropological principle that underlies Plato's philosophy
- 7) Describe the parts of the soul in terms of experience explicated by Socrates.
- 8) Relate the experience of the Agathon to the turning around in the parable of the cave.
- 9) Compare Aristotle's concept of the mature man (spoudaios) to Plato's prudent man (phronimos)
- 10) Describe what level of precision is there in matters concerning justice.
- 11) How is the preciseness of moral judgments treated by reference to Aristotle's discussion of right by nature?
- 12) How does St. Augustine's concept of the City of Man differ from Plato's best regime?

- 13) Consider the question of what is the origin of evil?
- 14) Describe how the City of Man and the City of God are “entangled together in this world.”
- 15) Explain how the providential view of history defines Western civilization?
- 16) Discuss Petrarch’s division of history into a pre-Christian age of light and a dark age
- 17) List some of Machiavelli’s rules of the political ‘process.’
- 18) Contrast rules of behavior to rules of right action.
- 19) Discuss Machiavelli’s concept of the benefits of faction.
- 20) Contrast Hobbes’s concept of “Right of Nature” to Aristotle’s “right by nature.”
- 21) Compare Hobbes’ concept of the state of nature to Augustine’s concept of the City of Man.
- 22) Compare and contrast Aristotle’s concept of right by nature with “natural right” in Hobbes.
- 23) Compare the state of nature in Locke with the state of nature in Hobbes.
- 24) Compare the government of civil Society in Locke to Hobbes Sovereign.
- 25) Discuss what weaknesses of the state of nature lead men to enter into Civil Society in Locke’s political theory
- 26) Compare the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence to Locke’s use of the word “Nature.”
- 27) Compare the State of Nature in Rousseau with that concept in Locke and Hobbes.
- 28) Compare Locke’s property oriented Civil Society with Rousseau’s questioning of the legitimacy of traditional society.
- 29) Discuss how men’s actions become moral using Rousseau’s concepts. Compare that to the classical concept of justice.
- 30) Describe the development of political religions in the West and relate them to Rousseau’s civil religion.
- 31) Describe how Renaissance hermeticism is related to modern political thought.
- 32) Relate Lubac’s concept of “atheist humanism” to Rousseau’s civil religion

5. Course Concepts

- 1) Prephilosophic myth and the concept of order of the cosmos.
- 2) The Greek philosophers’ discovery of the human psyche.
- 3) Greek philosophy’s anthropological concept of order vs. mythic cosmic order
- 4) Experience of transcendent divine reality in Greek philosophy
- 5) The birth of the modern in Petrarch’s division of history into a pre-Christian age of light and a dark age.
- 6) The rise of magic as an instrument of control of nature and nature’s God.

- 7) Hobbes' 'mortal god'
- 8) The State of Nature in Rousseau with that concept in Locke and Hobbes
- 9) Right by nature vs. modern law of nature
- 10) Rousseau's General Will vs. the classical Common Good

6. Required Texts

Plato, *Republic*. Allan Bloom, thans. (Basic Books, 1991), ISBN: 0465069347. \$15.50

Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. Basic Works of Aristotle. (Princeton Review, 2001) ISBN: 0375757996.
\$ 13.97

Bishirjian, Richard, *The Development of Political Theory* (Dallas: Society for the Study of Traditional Culture, 1978). Provided as "Lectures" in your course delivery system.

St. Augustine, *City of God*. Marcus Dods, trans. (Modern Library, 2000) ISBN: 0679783199. \$11.17

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*. Maurice Cranston, trans. (Penguin, 1968), ISBN: 0140442014. \$9.00

7. Recommended Reading:

Wiser, James, *Political Theory: A Thematic Inquiry* (Burnham Inc., 1986). ISBN: 0830410694

8. Additional Resources (located in "Resources" in Izio)