

COURSE OUTLINE

1. **Course Number and Name:** Govt4405, History of Political Theory

Prerequisites:

Credits 3

2. Course Description: Govt4405, History of Political Theory, offers students an opportunity to study in depth four major thinkers who contributed to the development of political philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, and Rousseau. This study is facilitated by readings in *The Development of Political Theory*, and original text created especially for this course. That text explores the early origins of political discourse in myths and artifacts that we may trace as far back as ancient Anatolia, nearly 40,000 BP (“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 rejection of classical political philosophy by the modern political philosophers.

In the Lectures/Texts section of the delivery system for this course you’ll find a “Spotlight” posted for your readings. These “Spotlights” are reading guides that call to your attention important passages from your assigned readings to which you should pay particular attention. The Spotlights are not substitutes for reading the original works; but are designed to focus on important passages in those original works.

Since the discovery and development of political philosophy in the West originates with the ancient Greek philosophers, some of your readings or interpretive essays will use the Greek words. You should attempt a brief review of the Greek alphabet. Here’s a link to consider:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/koine/greek/lessons/alphabet.html>

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 Govt4405 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.

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, trans. (Basic Books, 1991), ISBN: 0465069347. \$15.50

Aristotle, *Nicomachean 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 at "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. Readings Referred to In Lectures:

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*. Michael Oakeshott, ed. (Touchstone, 1987) ISBN: 0684842955.

Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge, 1963), ISBN: 0521357306.

Snell, Bruno, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought* Dover Publications, 1982. ISBN-13: 9780486242644

Voegelin, Eric, *Plato* (University of Missouri Press, 200), ISBN: 0826212980.

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

Werner, Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (WIPF & Stock Publishers, 2003). ISBN: 1592443214

Additional Web Resources (located in “Resources” in Izio)

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: Govt4405

Course Name: History of Political Theory

Faculty: Richard J. Bishirjian, Ph.D.

Preliminaries: (Review Announcements)

Performance Requirements/Course Grade:

Assessments:

Five aspects of your performance in Govt4405 will determine your final grade:

- An exam taken at the end of **Session Three** on Plato’s political philosophy. The exam consists of eight essay questions and one list of philosophic concepts that you are asked to define. A non-graded “Pre-Test” is posted in Assignments. After you’ve completed your review of Plato, take the “Pre-Test,” wait for a grade and then take the test on Plato. Answer four questions: 20%.
- Beginning in **Session Five** you will be asked to create a spreadsheet that lists with two columns. One is titled “City of Man” and the other is titled “City of God.” Enter a description of each City as you find that City described by St. Augustine. Then write an essay that compares and contrasts these two cities based on their identifying marks that you've entered into your spreadsheet. 20%
- Participation in class discussions through contributing to class discussion threads using this course’s threaded Discussion functionality. Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic: 20%;
- A Final Exam taken at the end of **Session Eight** consisting of nine questions introduced in two parts titled “Ancient” and “Modern.” You are asked to answer four questions, two from “Ancient” and two from “Modern”: 20%.

- A Term Paper (10 page minimum) due at the end of **Session Eight**. Topic should be identified in consultation with your instructor by the end of Session 6: 20%.

The University's grading rubrics may be accessed at:
http://www.yorktownuniversity.edu/new_rubrics.cfm

Course Participation and assignment submissions: Students are responsible for participating in the course through the following academic activities: uploading assignments, posting to discussion folders, and responding to faculty inquiries. Students are expected to be involved in ongoing instructional activities based on the recommended schedule for course completion as detailed in the syllabus. In order to actively participate in a course, Students must make contact with their faculty mentor on a regular basis through one of the following methods:

- Posting of an assignment in the assignment area of the course web site (e.g., a paper, project, etc.).
- Posting of an assignment to share with the faculty mentor and other students in the course web site (e.g., a review of a book or article, a proposal for a research study, a presentation in the form of a PowerPoint presentation file, reporting on participation in a research study, etc).
- Participation in a threaded discussion in the course web site (e.g., commenting on a discussion question posted by the faculty mentor, providing feedback to another student, etc.).
- Viewing instructional materials (e.g., a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the faculty mentor, a streaming audio or video presentation, etc.).

Academic Integrity

Available the student handbook at www.yorktownuniversity.edu/students

Recommended schedule for course completion

Session One: Plato's Republic builds upon the language of philosophy that was developed by the Presocratic philosophers. In reading Bruno Snell we learn to distinguish between Homer's language in describing man and the subsequent new language used by Heraclitus. Snell calls this the "Discovery of the Mind" and on that discovery Plato developed a philosophic understanding of society as an order of the soul. That philosophy was developed in opposition to the Sophists and the corruption of society that they represented.

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, Preface and Cosmological Myth (included in Lectures)

Plato, Republic, Books I-II

Discussion Topic: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. Search the Web for representations of pre-philosophic depictions of man and those representations of man influenced by philosophy's discovery of the soul. Interpret those you find most suggestive of the "cosmic" view of order of pre-philosophic man. Examples are given in Resources and in Lectures/Text.
2. Comment on the posts at topic one.

Learning Outcomes:

- 4.1
- 4.2
- 4.3

Session Two: Examination of Plato's Republic and the development of philosophy as the opposite of philodoxy; the symbols of those who are awake and those who live as if in a dream; the arguments for justice offered by the younger generation represented by Glaukon and Adeimantus, and the argument of Thrasymachus that justice is actually injustice.

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, Platonic Philosophy (included in Lectures)

Plato, Republic, Books III-V

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. The proposal to create a city in speech is based on philosophical insights that were not found in the myths of ancient Greek civilization? Why?
2. What do you make of Thrasymachus? Are there contemporary parallels?

Learning Outcomes

- 4.4
- 4.5
- 4.6

Session Three: Plato's "Parable of the Cave" articulates the role of education, the shadow world of existent things and the turning around from the cave toward the light. The three waves that must be overcome if the just polis is to come into being. The nature of knowledge as knowledge of reality. Plato's critique of democracy and his analysis of regime change

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Plato, Republic, Books VI-X

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. In what ways may we differentiate Plato's allegory of the cave explains why those who are lovers of wisdom are distinguishable from lovers of opinion. It also differentiates the experience of the philosophers from the experience of the gods of that cosmological myths. Is there an equivalent today?

2. Plato discusses types of regimes by reference to character types that dominate those regimes. What do you make of that? What character types define the United States?

Plato Exam

Learning Outcomes

4.7

4.8

Session Four: Discussion of Aristotle's concepts of precision, political science as an art, his definition of human action, happiness, and prudence. Differentiation between moral and intellectual virtues and the role of friendship in society and man.

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Read passages from Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics cited in "Spotlight on Aristotle" located in "Lectures." Refer to those passages in full text of the Nichomachean Ethics.

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, Aristotle's Definition of Political Science

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. "Right by nature" in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics is unchanging and changeable. How can that be?

2. Aristotle refers to the *spoudaios* as the measure of what is right? Are there *spoudaioi* in today's America? If so, where?

Learning Outcomes

4.9

4.10

4.11

Session Five: The best regime defined in Christian terms. Nature as good, and evil seen as a turning away from God. The two cities or worlds of men who love themselves vs. those who love God live in time leading toward and end beyond the world. The Christian philosophy of history. Criticism of Varro's Antiquities and the distinction between natural and civil theology. Christian concept of the universality of mankind that transcends the limited view of the Greek philosophers. The philosophic accept of reality as given in order to understand unseen transcendent reality.

Assignments:

St. Augustine, City of God. Read passages from the City of God, cited in "Spotlight on St. Augustine" located in "Lectures."

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, Israel, Christianity and History.

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. St. Augustine's "summum bonum," highest good is the origin of order of the City of God. Is it equivalent to Plato's concept of The Good?

2. Is the division of the world into two cities applicable today?

Begin spreadsheet assignment.

Discussion with instructor of term paper topic due at the end of Session Eight.

Learning Outcomes

4.12

4.13

4.14

4.15

Session Six: Discussion of Machiavelli's Prince and Discourses. Similarity of Machiavelli's rules for the Prince to value neutral principles of modern

behaviorism. Separation of politics from consideration of the spiritual and ethical. Machiavelli in the context of Renaissance Italy and the chiliasm of Savonarolla.

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, Is Machiavelli Modern?

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. As you read St. Augustine, you made note of the different comments he makes about Virtue. Now, compare and contrast St. Augustine on 'virtue' with Machiavelli's use of the same concept.

2. Engage in some philological research into the actual words that St. Augustine and Machiavelli use in discussing "virtue" and "virtu." Post your findings.

Learning Outcomes

4.16

4.17

4.18

4.19

Session Seven: Rousseau's revolutionary will. Rousseau's agreement with Hobbes and Locke that civil society is not given in nature. Procedural remedies for overcoming the limitations of civil society. Growth of inequality. The General Will. Rousseau's Legislator and the role of civil religion.

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Rousseau, Social Contract, Books 1 & 2 and review "Spotlight on Rousseau," located in "Lectures" in Izio.

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, "The Politics of Revolution"

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. Compare and contrast Rousseau's State of Nature with that of Hobbes and Locke.

2. What defines what is modern in Rousseau's thought?

Learning Outcomes

4.27

4.28
4.29
4.30

Session Eight: Civil Religion of the modern political philosophers. The rise of political religion

Assignments:

Required Reading:

Read Rousseau, Social Contract, Books 3 & 4.

Bishirjian, Development of Political Theory, "Modern Political Religion"

Discussion Topics: Choose a topic, post a comment and wait for your instructor to respond. Respond to that response and choose a second topic:

1. Comment on Rousseau's Sovereign in light of your understanding of limits on state power developed in the Western tradition of political theory.

2. Comment on the discussion of Renaissance Hermeticism in Development of Political Theory.

Term Paper Due

Final Exam

Learning Outcomes

4.31
4.32