

Political Theory 4013: Ancient Political Thought

Florida Atlantic University, Fall 2019

Course Credits: 3.000 Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

TR 2:00-3:20PM, Physical Science Building Boca 111

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Office Hours: TR 12:00-1:00PM,
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“The beginning is the most important part of every work.”

–Socrates, Plato’s *Republic*, 377a-b

Course Description

Many of the foundational ideas of contemporary Western politics can be traced back to ancient Greece, specifically to Athens, the birthplace of democracy. Indeed, the modern term “politics” itself comes from the ancient Greek *politikos*, meaning “of, for, or relating to citizens.” The aim of this course is to gain a better understanding of this ancient influence on modern politics by engaging in close reading and analysis of some of the best-known texts in the history of Western political thought. In the process, we will consider how the study of politics itself originated, and ask whether we can learn anything from ancient approaches or if they are simply outmoded.

Focusing on the ancient Greeks, we begin with Homer’s *Odyssey* to see how poetry and myth once provided an engaging platform for grappling with perennial political problems arising from the complexities of human nature and justice. After being introduced to Socrates through comic writer Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Plato’s *Apology*, we then turn to Plato’s magnum opus *The Republic* to examine the transformation from the mythopoeic tradition to the philosophic method of studying politics. The course ends with selections from Aristotle’s *Politics*, in which we will see the first seeds of modern political science. Throughout, we will reflect on these transformations, considering both what has been gained and what has been lost. By thinking with the ancients about timeless questions involving citizenship, sovereignty, justice, power, and liberty, we will be able to look with fresh eyes upon contemporary political thought and practice—eyes better able to trace the influence of ancient thinking on contemporary political life, and to assess whether that influence is to be celebrated, regretted, or both.

Objectives

- 1) Become familiar with major questions, themes, and approaches in ancient political thought and their application to contemporary political life.
- 2) Learn to read and interpret political theory texts.
- 3) Improve ability to construct persuasive arguments, both verbal and written.
- 4) Practice a more contemplative and self-aware form of citizenship, and consider its effects on political life and personal fulfillment.

Classroom Expectations

This class brings to life the art of Socratic conversation. For this method of teaching to work, students must show up having carefully read the material assigned for that day. Throughout the session, I will ask questions to help you all uncover the meaning of the text for yourselves. This questioning can take many forms. I may ask you to turn to a specific passage, read it aloud, and then explain what you think the author means. I may ask a more open-ended question (e.g., “What does the author say about x?”) and expect you to provide the textual evidence. I may break you up into small groups to discuss whether or not the argument is persuasive.

Though I may stop at points to clarify some fundamental concepts with the help of a few Powerpoint slides, a video clip, etc., the vast majority of our class time will be spent working through the material *together*. While I generally do not “call” on students, I expect (and make every effort to invite) broad participation. It should be evident from this description that if no one has done the readings, or only a few students have done the readings, then the class will not go very far. Such is the nature of Socratic inquiry: it depends heavily on student engagement. The purpose of this is to help you become a better reader and thinker. You and your classmates will get out of the class what you put in. Aim to be a good classroom citizen.

Preparing for Class

- As you will discover, political theory readings tend to be dense, requiring focused attention. There are no “abstracts” at the top, nor is it possible to skim these readings and retain much understanding. Rather, the readings are similar to what you would expect from a philosophy course: a series of arguments you must closely follow. This means you should set aside ample time *before* class to read the material listed on the syllabus for that day, as you will likely find that you need to *re-read* parts of the text.
- You should also be an active reader. As you read, write a few words summarizing each paragraph in the margins, underline/highlight any phrases or passages that stand out to you, look up the definitions of unfamiliar words, write down any questions or reactions you have in response to the arguments the author is making, etc. **If you do not like reading, you should reconsider taking this course. You cannot pass without doing the readings.**

Participating in Class

- For a Socratic discussion to work, everyone must be present—not just physically, but psychologically. You cannot be present if you are checking email, chatting online, watching ESPN, etc. Accordingly, use of electronic devices is strongly discouraged during class time. **If you choose to use an electronic device, be prepared for me to call on you.**
- Many find the texts assigned in this course controversial; among other ideas, you will encounter criticism of democracy, promotion of communism, and justification of slavery. Each class session, I will push you to think “sympathetically” about the text by taking on the voice of the author in defense of the arguments. This means at times I will appear to adopt some unsavory positions. If you are uncomfortable with teachers who play “devil’s advocate,” or don’t like it when teachers sometimes withhold their own opinions in an effort to get you to think for yourself, then you probably will not enjoy this class.
- I expect you to treat your peers and me with respect. We may disagree, but we will do so cordially. That means being an attentive listener, raising your hand and waiting to be called on, and critiquing the argument rather than the person who made it.

After Class

- With many students and limited class time, not every question will be satisfactorily addressed for every student. If you find yourself confused about anything, first try re-reading the text. If you are still lost, please don't hesitate to visit me during office hours or send me an email.

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the FAU Bookstore. **I highly recommend that you purchase paper copies of these exact editions.** Throughout each class session, you will be asked to turn to specific pages in the book. If you do not have the same edition or cannot easily turn to a given page, you will be lost and unable to contribute as effectively. Keep in mind that copies of each book will be available on 24-hour reserve at the FAU library. **Also, please be aware that if you decide to read texts from an electronic device, you should be prepared for me to call on you.**

Aristotle, *Politics*, Trans. Ernest Barker, Oxford University Press, 2009.

ISBN: 9780199538737

Homer, *Odyssey*, Trans. Stanley Lombardo, Hackett Publishing Company, 2000.

ISBN: 9780872204843

Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Trans. Allan Bloom, 3rd edition, Basic Books, 2016.

ISBN: 9780465094097

Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*, Trans. Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West, Cornell University Press, 1998.

ISBN: 9780801485749

Course Requirements

Participation:	20%	
Quizzes:	20%	
Presentation:	10%	
Term paper:	50%	(Paper Proposals: 5%; Peer Drafts & Edits: 10%; Paper #1: 15%; Paper #2: 20%)

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade will be comprised of two, equally weighted components: attendance and participation in class discussions/activities.

- **Attendance:** I will take attendance each time we meet. Everyone is permitted *one unexcused absence* and *two excused absences*. **Excused absences require make up work, which is due within a week of the absence.** For an absence to be excused, you must clear it with me in advance or, in cases of illness or emergency, as soon as possible. The following generally count as *unexcused* absences: slept through alarm; need to study/work; need to finish an assignment; leaving early/arriving back late from vacation; bad hangover.

If you think you will miss more than three classes due to University-approved activities, please see me at the start of the semester. Please note I will abide by *FAU's official*

attendance policy: “Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student’s responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student’s final course grade as a direct result of such absence.”

- **Participation**: Attendance makes up only half of your overall participation grade; the other half is based on your participation in class discussions/activities. This means **you cannot earn above a 50% for your participation grade if you never speak in class, even if you have perfect attendance.** Students who struggle with classroom participation should therefore schedule a meeting with me during the first week of class to discuss strategies for increasing classroom participation. It is also possible to *supplement* one’s participation grade with office hour visits, emails demonstrating engagement with the material, extra Canvas discussion board responses, etc. If, on the other hand, you do not struggle with public speaking, note that speaking frequently does not guarantee you a good participation grade. **I value quality of contributions over quantity.** You must reference details from the readings and point the class to specific passages to earn a good participation grade.

Quizzes (20%)

A short quiz will be administered promptly at the beginning of each class. These quizzes will test how closely you read the text(s) assigned for that day. Please note: **if you do not do the reading, you will not pass the quiz.** As you will discover, the quizzes will ask about details not found on Sparknotes, Wikipedia, etc. It is therefore essential to do the readings in full. During the quiz, you may use notes you have handwritten on a separate sheet of paper or in a notebook created for this class. To ensure your grade is not adversely affected by a particularly difficult quiz, **I will drop your lowest three quiz scores.** There are no make-up quizzes. If you walk into class after the quiz has already been collected, you will not be able to take it.

Presentation (10%)

Once during the semester you will give a short (3-5 minute) presentation connecting that day’s readings to a contemporary issue of political relevance. The goal is to get the class thinking about how the questions the ancients explored still confront us today. Further instructions will be handed out and discussed in class.

Term Paper (50%)

The major requirement of the course is a 10-12 page (double-spaced) term paper. Don’t let the length fool you. This paper is designed to help you become a better thinker and more persuasive writer, whether you consider yourself to be a “good” writer or not. This class will stress the link between clear, compelling writing and sound thinking. It will advance the view that writing *is* thinking and that one way to develop your thinking is to work on your writing. As such, we will write, re-write, and re-write some more. The process will be grueling and, if done right, will throw you into existential perplexity (a rarely experienced feeling in our modern age of instantaneous

“answers”). However, by breaking it down into smaller pieces and teaching writing as a process at which anyone can excel, I hope you will find the assignment manageable and rewarding.

The term paper will be completed in two cycles. Each cycle will involve writing a paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final paper. You will also edit a peer’s paper for each cycle. For the first cycle, you will work on crafting a 4-5 page paper (hereafter, Paper #1) that analyzes Homer’s approach in the *Odyssey* to a political question of your choice. After writing and receiving feedback from me on a 1-page paper proposal, you will write an initial draft of Paper #1, which you will exchange with an assigned peer editor. Based on her or his feedback, you will craft the final version of Paper #1. I will then give you extensive comments on this paper, which you will use to revise the paper as you build on it to create the full, 10-12 page paper (Paper #2). Like Paper #1, Paper #2 will involve writing a 1-page paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final version. The difference is that Paper #2 will consist of your analysis of Homer’s approach in the *Odyssey* to the political question of your choice (i.e., Paper #1) *plus* an analysis of Plato’s approach in the *Republic* to the same question. Yet, it will go beyond analysis, as you will be asked to craft your paper around your stance on which author’s approach to the question is most compelling. By the end of the semester, you will have re-conceptualized and revised your paper numerous times, as well as received feedback from various sources. This is a paper you won’t forget!

Term Paper Due Dates

Paper Proposal #1	Sep. 18
Peer Draft #1	Oct. 4
Peer Edit #1	Oct. 9
Paper #1	Oct. 16
Paper Proposal #2	Nov. 6
Peer Draft #2	Nov. 27
Peer Edit #2	Nov. 29
Paper #2	Dec. 11

Grading Policies

- *Quizzes:* There are no make up quizzes. If you miss a quiz for an unexcused absence, that quiz will count as one of your 3 dropped scores. If you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the number of points for that quiz will be subtracted from the total number of quiz points when calculating your quiz grade. In other words, if you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the quiz simply won’t count for or against you.
- *Presentations:* Unless you receive an excused absence for one of the legitimate reasons listed in the “attendance” section above, you must give your presentation on the assigned day. If you miss class that day due to an unexcused absence, you will receive a 0 for the presentation.
- *Essays:* Essays are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. You must submit both a hard copy and an electronic copy. Late papers will be penalized 5% if less than an hour late. Beyond an hour late (even by a single minute), papers will be penalized 10% per every 24-hour period late. This means that your paper will not be accepted for any credit if it is 10 or more days late. The best way to avoid a late penalty is to make sure to submit your work well ahead of the deadline. **Note that copy-editing and revision are integral parts of the writing process. Papers that show an unacceptably high level of error or carelessness (for**

instance, five or more errors in a paragraph) will be returned for you to proofread before resubmitting them. You will have five business days to edit the paper and to resubmit it with an automatic penalty of 10%. After five days, the grade on the paper will automatically drop to an F.

- *Graded Work:* I will not discuss grades on any assignments for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours reflection, you do not understand why you received a particular grade, send me a written memo via email and I will respond as soon as possible.
- *Extra Credit:* There will be an extra credit question on every quiz, allowing you to accumulate extra credit points throughout the semester. In addition, you can receive 5 extra credit points (out of 100) on your final essay by visiting my office to discuss the material with me. To receive the extra credit, you must: (1) bring the text with you; (2) come prepared with a few questions or passages you want to discuss; and (3) visit for at least 15 minutes. You can only receive the extra credit points once, though additional office hour visits can help to supplement your participation grade.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100	A- = 91-93.99	B+ = 87-90.99	B = 83-86.99
B- = 80-82.99	C+ = 77-79.99	C = 73-76.99	C- = 70-72.99
D+ = 67-69.99	D = 63-66.99	D- = 60-62.99	F = below 60

Honor Code Violations

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf.

Please note that I take plagiarism very seriously. If I catch you plagiarizing on a paper, you will receive an automatic “F” in the course and will be reported to the university, which will likely result in a permanent honor violation notation on your transcript. So that we are all on the same page, here is the university’s definition of plagiarism (found in the document linked above):

- “1. The presentation of words from any other source or another person as one’s own without proper quotation and citation.*
- 2. Putting someone else’s ideas or facts into your own words (paraphrasing) without proper citation.*
- 3. Turning in someone else’s work as one’s own, including the buying and selling of term papers or assignments.” (FAU Code of Academic Integrity, 2.B)*

Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/. If you require a special accommodation, please make an appointment at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodation with me.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAP) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>.

Course Schedule

Section I: The Mythopoeic Tradition

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
21-Aug	Introduction		
23-Aug	<i>Telemachia</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 1-4	
28-Aug	Odysseus’ Journey	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 5-8	
30-Aug	Odysseus’ Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 9-12	
04-Sep	Odysseus and Telemachus Return	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 13-16	
06-Sep	Odysseus’ Plot	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 17-20	
11-Sep	Odysseus	<input type="checkbox"/> Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 21-24	

Section II: The Birth of Political Philosophy

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
13-Sep	The Greeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch <i>The Greeks</i> in class	
18-Sep	The Greeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch <i>The Greeks</i> in class	Paper Proposal #1
20-Sep	Socrates as Sophist	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristophanes’ <i>Clouds</i> , lines 1-888	
25-Sep	Dangers of Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristophanes’ <i>Clouds</i> , lines 889-end	

27-Sep	Socrates' Defense	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Apology</i>	
02-Oct	Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book I, 327a-336a	
04-Oct	Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book I, 336b-354c	Peer Draft #1
09-Oct	City-Soul Analogy	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book II	Peer Edit #1
11-Oct	Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book III	
16-Oct	Virtues	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book IV	Paper #1
18-Oct	Three Waves	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book V	
23-Oct	Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VI	
25-Oct	Cave Allegory	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VII	
30-Oct	Regime Types	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VIII	
01-Nov	Tyranny	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book IX	
06-Nov	Poetry & Myth	<input type="checkbox"/> Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book X	Paper Proposal #2

Section III: Towards a Modern Political Science

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
08-Nov	Political Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book I	
13-Nov	Critique of Plato	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book II, Ch. 1-5; Book III, Ch. 1-5	
15-Nov	Regime Types	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book III, Ch. 6-13	
20-Nov	Best Regime	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book IV, Ch. 1-4, 11-12	
22-Nov	No Class	Thanksgiving Holiday	
27-Nov	Regime Change	<input type="checkbox"/> Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book V, Ch. 1-5	Peer Draft #2
29-Nov	Ideal Regime	Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> , Book VII, Ch. 1-8, Book VIII, Ch. 1-5	Peer Edit #2
Tuesday, Dec. 11, 1:15-3:45PM	Concluding Remarks	Paper #2 Due	Paper #2