

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**POLS 160A, Classical Political Thought, Fall 2022**

**Course and Contact Information**

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**Office Hours:** Wed 1-2, and by appointment  
**Class Days/Time:** MW 10:30-11:45  
**Classroom:** DMH 160

**3 units**

**Canvas learning management system**

Course materials can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You can learn how to access this site at this web address:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/index.html>

**Course Description**

*Catalog description:* Critical examination of the foundations of Western political thought and the continuing influence of these foundations; sources chosen from among a variety of pre-Renaissance traditions and include writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas.

*Additional description:* This course reawakens the great debates which shaped our political heritage. This course has two different but complimentary goals in terms of its "scope." First, it seeks to give students a taste of in-depth analysis of the most influential period in the history of political thought: Greece, and particularly Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Second, this course is designed as a part of a three-semester sequence which surveys the growth of political thought in the West. This second purpose demands an introduction to the non-Greek components of our political heritage;

Hebrew, Christian, and Roman political thought. In addition, it is useful to form some contrasts with the political thought of other cultures, such as China. Some of the issues we will examine include: democracy, justice, freedom, nature, history and politics, race, class, gender, the founding of political science, war, ethics, religion and politics, justice, slavery, and law.

*Political Theory description:* Political theory, while taught within political science departments, shares many similarities with literature, history, philosophy, and the humanities. It cultivates a kind of thinking more than it disseminates a body of knowledge. Students learn to criticize ideas, analyze texts, create theories, and construct arguments, among other things. Memorization skills and objective knowledge play little role in it. For these reasons, the course is well suited for students who wish to cultivate their writing, their analytic skills, their ability to appreciate literature, as well as their understanding of ethical, social, and political problems.

### **Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)**

- **Breadth** Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- **Application and Disciplinary Methods** Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- **Communication Skills** Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
- **Citizenship** Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

### **Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. CLO 1 Explain the development of several themes of Classical Political Thought over time. This is assessed in your essays.
2. CLO 2 Read, understand, summarize and critique several of the most significant texts in the development of Classical Political Thought. This is assessed primarily through the quizzes and the final.
3. CLO 3 Apply an understanding of the development of Classical Political Thought to contemporary political issues. This is assessed through your essays—particularly the strength of their conclusions-- and your final.

### **Required Texts/Readings**

You really need to own these books and bring them to class with you, to help you follow lectures and to complete the open-book quizzes.

1. Plato, *The Trial and Death Socrates* (Hackett).
2. Plato, *The Republic* (Crofts).

3. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (Mentor).
4. Aristotle, *The Politics* (Penguin.).
5. Mengzi (trans Van Norden, Hackett).
6. Thucydides, *Justice, Power, and Human Nature* (Hackett).
7. Cicero, *On Government* (Penguin.).
8. The Hebrew Bible, The New Testament (or your own preferred edition of a Bible. Copies of the “New Oxford Annotated Bible newly revised with the apocrypha standard edition” have been ordered as an option. This is the most commonly used ecumenical college study Bible.)

### **Assignments (All dates for assignments available on Canvas):**

Final Examination (100 points.)

The Final will consist of short answer essays drawn directly from the discussion questions provided in the daily study guide. You will write well-formed paragraphs on each of 10 of 12 questions with which you will be provided. You should bring one or more large Examination Books and blue or black pens to the exam. The exam will be closed-book. The best way to prepare for the exam is to review potential answers to all the provided discussion questions, and the best way to do that is to keep up with reading, attend lectures, to take notes, and to meet in small study groups to compare ideas. Office hours are another good resource to use to understand questions that are not clear to you after lecture.

Two Essays (100 points each.)

Two critical essays are required. The specific essay topics will be distributed approximately two weeks before they are due. For each essay, you are to write a five-seven page essay, approximately 2000 words. Extensive advice and examples are provided in an essay writing guide that is provided on Canvas. The essays will be turned in via Canvas and will be checked electronically for proper citation of any consulted materials. Please see the section on academic integrity and plagiarism for further details.

Rewrite of the first essay: Anyone wishing to re-write their essay after receiving my evaluation may do so after meeting with me in a writing conference. The final overall essay grade for those doing the rewrite is the average of the original and the rewritten versions. Minor changes to the paper will not be rewarded—take this option only if you are willing to do a substantial rewrite.

Quizzes. (100 points total)

There will be six unannounced quizzes scattered throughout the semester. Each quiz will ask you to write a thoughtful response to a quotations drawn from readings that were recently assigned in the course. Each quiz will count up to 20 points. The top five quizzes will be counted and the lowest of the six discarded. Fifteen minutes will be given for each quiz. Students who arrive to class late while the quiz is being given will not be given the quiz. Quizzes will not be made up unless a student documents excused absences for 2 or more of the quizzes. *The quizzes permit the use of physical texts and notes but not electronic devices.*

**Extra Credit.**

Students may earn a modest number of extra credit points to replace points missed on other assignments. Students who contribute positively to the class through oral participation may be awarded up to 12 additional points which is equivalent to boosting the final grade for the course by up to 1/3 of a letter grade: for example, from a B+ to an A-. The number of points depends on the quality, quantity, and the civility of the participation. See the guide on participation available on Canvas.

To encourage students to read and to enjoy reading, I also will award up to 10 additional points to a student who reads an approved historical novel or a biography centered on one of the authors we read in this course. The student will bring the book to an oral examination and carry on a conversation about the book during office hours. The number of points awarded depends upon how thoroughly the student read the book and is able to explain significant passages.

### **Penalties for missed or later assignments.**

It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for any planned absences which will interfere with assignments, and to contact Prof. Peter at the first available opportunity concerning emergencies which cause a missed assignment.

- a. Final exam. Students who miss the final due to a verifiable emergency or University activity that cannot be changed will be allowed to take an alternate exam during a make-up period. Dr. Peter may request or independently seek verification.
- b. Essays. Essays turned in late will be deducted 3 points if less than one day late, 7 points if less than three days late, and ten points if less than one week late. Essays that are more than one week late will not be accepted without first conferencing with Professor Peter. Papers turned in after the last day of class may not be accepted at all, resulting in a failing grade for the paper and possibly the course.
- c. Quizzes. A single missed quiz is not normally made up since the grade for the lowest quiz is simply discarded anyway. If a student has written documentation that an SJSU sanctioned activity or a medical excuse has interfered with two or more quiz dates will a make-up be authorized.

### Calculation of Final Grade

The final grade is determined using the cumulative percentage of the assigned 400 points, plus whatever extra credit is earned. The letter grades assigned are the standard conversion as follows:

98-100 A plus  
93-97 A  
90-92 A minus  
88-89 B plus  
83-87 B  
80-82 B minus  
78-79 C plus  
73-77 C  
70-72 C minus  
68-69 D plus  
63-67 D  
60-62 D minus  
0-59 F

## Incompletes

Sometimes students need alternatives to finishing the course. I will be happy to issue an incomplete if 1) a student has made arrangements for making up the course by coming to me before the last day of class and negotiating an incomplete contract, 2) the student has completed 2/3 of the assignments and does not need to attend the course to complete it, and 3) the student offers evidence of extenuating circumstances. My own experience is that students who do not finish the work for an incomplete within a few weeks never do so, and after one year the incompletes automatically become “Fs” if not finished. So be warned that this option is quite risky.

## Academic Renewal

An alternative for students who do not qualify for the incomplete (for example, if you have done less than 2/3 of the assignments or you need to attend a lot of lectures) is to accept a failing grade but to retake the course under academic renewal. You are limited to a certain number of courses over your college career, but this can be an excellent option in certain situations—particularly if the reasons for failing were related to life circumstances that are likely to change in a future semester.

## Dropping the course and Failing Grades

I will cooperate with any student wishing to drop the course for any reason. However, the University has adopted strict rules against dropping a course after a short period at the beginning of the semester. I personally disagree with the policy but have no control over it.

I am required to issue “WU”s (Withdrawal Unauthorized) to students who do not drop the course but who stop coming to class and doing the assignments. Since I do not formally take attendance, I determine whether a student has stopped attending by looking at assignments. I give “WU”s to those students who “disappear” without doing any graded assignments in the last half of the course. A WU counts as an “F,” so be sure to officially withdraw from the course (early!) and don’t assume (falsely!) that you will be removed from the roster by me or by the University.

## Classroom Protocol

Courtesy.

Proper classroom etiquette includes:

- arriving on time and staying for the full lecture,
- refraining from distracting other students during the lecture,
- listening attentively until the professor dismisses the class,
- treating the opinions of other students with respect,
- turning off cell phones and using laptops only for class related activities.

The professor reserves the right to deduct from the overall grade for particularly egregious examples of poor classroom etiquette, and to reward students for outstanding displays of collegiality.

Attendance.

Regular, on-time attendance is especially important for these reasons:

- Lectures help explain the original-source readings we do. Most students report that they have a difficult time understanding the readings without the help of the lectures.
- Lectures often cover materials completely independent and/or supplementary to the texts.
- Lectures provide an opportunity for questions, participation, and getting motivated to do the rest of the work.
- Often, important announcements are made at the beginning of class--sometimes clarifying or changing assignments.
- Participation credit is awarded to students who consistently and effectively participate. One cannot participate while absent.
- You must attend to do the quizzes, which are not normally made up.
- If you are absent, it is your responsibility to get notes on what you missed. If an assignment or the syllabus was changed during your absence, you are responsible for finding this out..

## Reading.

This is a reading course. Students should read each scheduled assignment prior to coming to class. Most students find they need to reread part or all of the material after the lecture, since the lecture helps them to further understand it, but reading it prior to the lecture helps students to be able to ask questions and even to listen intelligently. You will find that this kind of reading often needs to be done twice--you must refer back to the texts repeatedly while fulfilling the assignments.

Time commitment. Federal law requires that you be informed that success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend six hours per week in addition to the lectures for reading, writing, and studying. In this case, federal law is right. Students surveyed upon completing this course really do report that it takes them a large investment of time to do the reading and keep up with the work. Do not take this course if you cannot afford to make that significant time commitment.

# Course Schedule and Daily Study Guide

A daily listing of reading assignments and other assignments

| Lecture | Date     | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines  |
|---------|----------|---|
| 1       | M Aug 22 | <p><b>"Introduction to Political Theory"</b></p> <p>Reading: None</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is politics about? What does "politics" really mean?</li> <li>2. How can we think theoretically about politics? Why would we want to?</li> <li>3. What is meant by "a critical perspective towards politics?" What are some common political assumptions that most of us take for granted? Do you think there might be some that are so deep that you can't exactly say what they are?</li> <li>4. What is the relationship of theory to practice? Can political theory be relevant in your life?</li> <li>5. What is "classical political theory" and what is "classical" about it?</li> </ol>   |
| 2       | W Aug 24 | <p><b>"Hebrew Covenant and Community"</b></p> <p>Readings: Readings in the Hebrew Bible (aka "Old Testament" to Christians) in any Bible of your choice, Oxford Annotated recommended, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genesis 1-9, all; 11:1-9; 15:1-6; 17:all</li> <li>• Exodus 18:13-end; 19: all; 34:all</li> </ul> <p>Notes: "Citing Chapter and Verse." The reading assignment above gives you the chapter and verse numbers of the parts of the Bible that you are to read. In this way you will be able to find the exact spot to read even if you are using a different edition. For example, when it says "Exodus 18:13-end" it means the book of Exodus, Chapter 18, begin with verse 13 and continue until the end of the chapter. The use of the term "verse" stems from the fact that much of the Bible was written as poetry—a feature that is largely lost in translation.</p> <p>There are some differences in the way the Hebrew Bible, the Catholic Old Testament, and Protestant Old Testament are organized. Christians divide the Book of Samuel into 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, for example, while the Hebrew Bible does not. Catholics have 46 books in the Old Testament while Protestants have 39—though they put the other 7 into something they call "The Apocrypha." The recommended Bible for purchase has notes on all these differences so you can follow along, but almost none of the differences are significant for the purposes of this course.</p> |

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|   |          | <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does religion have anything to do with political theory?</li> <li>2. What are the social and political implications of Genesis? For two examples, consider nature, and women. Are any of the cultural values described in this book still with us?</li> <li>3. How did the Hebrew people define themselves as a people? In what specific sense are they a community? What is the relationship of community to covenant? How does any society define itself as a distinct society?</li> <li>4. Can you find the three different examples of covenant in the readings? What are they? How are they similar to each other, and how are they different?</li> </ol>  |
| 3 | M Aug 29 | <p><b>“Hebrew Law”</b></p> <p>Readings: Readings in the Hebrew Bible (aka “Old Testament” to Christians) in any Bible of your choice, Oxford Annotated recommended, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exodus 20-22 all.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most people have heard of and many have read the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20:1-17. Objectively, what do you think of the list? Are they comprehensive enough to be the basis of an entire legal system? What values do they reflect? Is anything left out?</li> <li>2. Do a close reading of Exodus 21 and 22, which follow up the commandments with the description of jurisprudence. How many modern parallels can you find?</li> </ol>  |
| 4 | W Aug 31 | <p><b>“King David and Hebrew Politics”</b></p> <p><b>Note: campus closed Monday 9/2 Labor Day</b></p> <p>Readings: Readings in the Hebrew Bible (aka “Old Testament” to Christians) in any Bible of your choice, Oxford Annotated recommended, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1Samuel 8-12 all; 16-18 all; 24 all; 26 all;</li> <li>• 2Samuel 11-12 all</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the Hebrew attitude towards kingship? Is there some dissension? What is the relationship between church and state in the Hebrew Bible?</li> <li>2. What sort of a king was David? Why didn't he simply murder Saul when he had the chance? What was the basis of his authority over the Hebrew people?</li> <li>3. Is "David and Batheshe'ba" a "love story?" Which modern politician most resembles David?</li> </ol> |



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| 5 | W Sep 7  | <p><b>“Athenian Democracy through Pericles’ eyes”</b></p> <p>Readings: Thucydides On Justice Power and Human Nature (selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pp.1-58 (chapters 1-3).</li> </ul> <p>Notes: These selections are some of the more famous speeches and passages in Thucydides' book. Thucydides did not simply "copy down" the speeches from the important statesmen who are portrayed; instead, he made the statesmen say those things which he thought appropriate, almost as if the speakers were different characters in a play. Think about what each speaker represents, and what Thucydides was trying to get across through each speech.</p> <p>To avoid confusion in your reading, note that Lacedaemonia is the region surrounding and controlled by Sparta, and is used as a synonym for Sparta.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does Thucydides say about his methods? What is his idea of “history?” Can you trust him?</li> <li>2. What specifically are the various qualities and values that Pericles discusses in his famous “Funeral Oration?” How modern do they seem? Are they worthy ideals?</li> <li>3. In Pericles’ next speech he takes a different tone than in the Funeral Oration? Why?</li> </ol> |
| 6 | M Sep 12 | <p><b>“Thucydides and Athenian Empire”</b></p> <p>Readings: Thucydides On Justice Power and Human Nature (selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pp. 59-160 (chapters 4-8.)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the various speeches given by Athenians, how do the tone of the speeches and the arguments change as the war progresses? Do you think Thucydides is trying to tell us something?</li> <li>2. What do you make of the Mytilenian debate? Would you agree more with Cleon or Diodotus?</li> <li>3. What lessons about human nature might Thucydides be attempting to draw from the civil war in Corcyra?</li> <li>4. What is your analysis of the Melian dialogue? If you were a Melian, what arguments would you have used to persuade the Athenian generals not to destroy you? Does “might make right?”</li> <li>5. Why did Athens so far overreach itself by attacking Syracuse? Could Thucydides be using dramaturgical techniques (literary devices developed for Athenian drama) to show Athenian hubris (overweening and excessive pride.)</li> <li>6. As a democracy which, like Athens, has both conquered vast</li> </ol>   |

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|   |          | <p>territories, has had vigorous internal debates about the ethics of expansionism, which has overreached its limits in places like Vietnam, and which some believe suffers from excessive and self-congratulatory pride, would you say that the United States can usefully be compared with Athens during the Peloponnesian War? (And if that isn't a loaded question! But feel free to challenge the question!)</p>   |
| 7 | W Sep 14 | <p><b>“Aristophanes and Lysistrata”</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin Aristophanes, Lysistrata.</li> </ul> <p>Notes: Aristophanes' Lysistrata is outrageously funny and overtly sexual-reading it for the first time is bound to be too much fun to be considered work. But it also contains a radical critique of war and the male-dominated culture of Athens. Pause in your laughter to think about its political implications.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of discussing political ideas in a play? What literary techniques (dramatic contrast, characterization, plot, symbolism, range of emotions, etc.) does Aristophanes use to communicate his political ideas? How does Lysistrata compare with recent parodies and satires?</li> <li>2. This play was written and performed after the Athenians were decimated at Syracuse but before their democracy fell. How might the knowledge of these historical circumstances influence your reading of the play? How do you suppose the audience would have reacted if the play were performed at the beginning of the war? After the fall of Athens?</li> </ol> |
| 8 | M Sep 19 | <p><b>“Aristophanes and Lysistrata”</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclude Aristophanes, Lysistrata.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lysistrata delivers a “wool weaving metaphor” in which she compares Athenian politics to weaving a cloak. Examine this passage to see if you can spot why this passage was thought to be Aristophanes' own voice advocating democratic reforms of Athens.</li> <li>2. Of course he thinks that war is bad, but what else does Aristophanes have to say about war?</li> <li>3. Is Aristophanes' treatment of women progressive or regressive, in your view? For that matter, what is his treatment of women? Are all relations between the sexes relations of political power?</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>   |

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| 9  | W Sep 21 | <p><b>“Socrates and his ‘Apology’”</b></p> <p>Readings: Selections by Plato in The Trial and Death of Socrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Apology, (all); note you may skip the Euthyphro.)</li> </ul> <p>Notes: Plato has made it possible for Socrates to reach across history and capture the hearts and minds of countless generations of young people--just as he did when he was orally instructing the youth of Athens. Many students are profoundly affected by the story of Socrates' trial and death. Savor this reading rather than "ploughing through" it.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think of Socrates' defense? Is it an effective one? What was his purpose in making this kind of a defense?</li> <li>2. Find as many examples of irony in the Apology as you can. Why does Socrates use irony?</li> <li>3. What are the specific charges against Socrates, and what do you think is the real reason he is on trial?</li> <li>4. How close was the vote to convict? What does Socrates propose as his penalty after having been convicted?</li> <li>5. In what way was Socrates a prophet?</li> </ol> |
| 10 | M Sep 26 | <p><b>“The Crito”</b></p> <p>Readings: Selections by Plato in The Trial and Death of Socrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Crito, (all);</li> <li>• parts of Phaedo (all selections included in the pamphlet of the Phaedo, note you may skip the Euthyphro.)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are the Apology and the Crito consistent with each other? How can you reconcile his resistance in the former with his submission in the latter?</li> <li>2. What is Socrates' conception of "the Laws" in the Crito, and why does he feel his loyalty to them to be essential? Is Socrates describing a kind of social contract?</li> <li>3. Try and talk Socrates out of drinking the hemlock. What arguments would you use that Crito did not try? If you succeeded, would you be happy with yourself?</li> </ol>   |
| 11 | W Sep 28 | <p><b>“Introduction to the Republic”</b></p> <p><b>Note: Paper 1 due midnight September 29</b></p> <p>Readings: Plato's Republic, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. I, 336b to end (Thrasymachus)</li> <li>• Bk. II, 368c to end (nature of republic)</li> </ul> <p>Notes: How to understand the “Stephanus numbers.” In most editions of</p>   |

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|    |         | <p>Plato and many other classical texts, the texts will contain numbers in the margins or before paragraphs. These numbers are there so that people reading different translations or editions of the text (for example, one in the original Greek and one in translation) can find the exact same spot. I use those standardized “Stephanus” numbers rather than modern page numbers in the reading assignments.</p> <p>The required sections contain only the best-known and most provocative passages. The Republic is, without a doubt, the most famous piece of political philosophy ever written. There is still no universal agreement, however, as to what it is really about. Some think it is an elitist book, others think it is radical; some think it is not really about politics at all. Generating an "interpretation" of a key text that is fair and at the same time clarifies the work is one of the fine arts of political theory. It is your turn to try!</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of character was Thrasymachus? How does he challenge Socrates on the subject of justice? What is the relationship of political power to justice? Are there people today who still make the argument made by Thrasymachus?</li> <li>2. How does Socrates argue that the "stronger" can error in judgment? Does Socrates adequately refute Thrasymachus, or is he guilty of sophistry?</li> <li>3. What is Plato trying to accomplish in this book? What does Socrates mean when he proposes to “build a city of words”?</li> <li>4. What is the relationship between justice in the individual soul and justice in the state? What is the role of "harmony" in the Republic?</li> </ol> |
| 12 | M Oct 3 | <p><b>“Three Class harmony”</b></p> <p>Readings: Plato's Republic, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. III, 412a to end (noble lie etc.)</li> <li>• Bk. IV, 428e to end (justice and the soul)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the "Noble Lie" (a.k.a. "the myth of the metals", 414c)? How can a philosopher, of all people, justify lying? Or is it a lie at all?</li> <li>2. What would life be like for a Guardian? Why does Plato suggest such strict measures with regard to property, education, family life, etc? What virtues are these measures supposed to create? In a democracy, would similar measures be needed for everyone?</li> <li>3. What do you think of Plato’s definition of justice in Book 4 (“tending your own business and not meddling in others.”)? Do you embrace this idea of social harmony?</li> </ol>   |
| 13 | W Oct 5 | <p><b>1) Philosopher Queens? 2) Theory of the Forms.</b></p>   |

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|  |  | <p>Readings: Plato's Republic, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk V, 449 to 461e (women; genetics); 472c-473e (kings vs. philosophers)</li> <li>• Bk VI and VII, 507b to end (divided line)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why does Plato want women to be educated? Is Plato a "feminist?"</li> <li>2. How would Plato answer the charge that his theory is wildly impractical? (Hint, consider what he says around 472c.) What does this say about political philosophy in general?</li> <li>3. In his explanation of the "divided line" how does Plato distinguish between opinion and knowledge? Can you explain what Plato means when he suggests that the path to knowledge was by means of the "dialectic?"</li> </ol> |
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| 14 | M Oct 10 | <p><b>“Allegory of the Cave”</b></p> <p>Readings: Plato's Republic, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk VII, entire (the cave)</li> <li>• Bk. VIII, 555b to end (democracy and tyranny)</li> <li>• Bk. IX and X, optional. IX is a study of “the tyrannical man.” X explains why philosophically based education is superior to poetically based education, and then concludes with the Myth of Ur which suggests an afterlife in which a just life is rewarded.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the purpose of the cave allegory? Is it a myth? Describe the allegory in detail and offer your theory as to what each part symbolizes or represents. How would your allegory differ from Plato's?</li> <li>2. What is Plato's conception of democracy? Why is tyranny the natural consequence of democracy?</li> <li>3. Is the Republic an ideal state, or is it something else? How does the Republic redefine what “political theory” is?</li> </ol> |
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| 15 | W Oct 12 | <p><b>“Introduction to Aristotle”</b></p> <p>Readings: Aristotle's Politics, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. I, i-ix, xii-xiii (political anthropology, the state and nature, slavery, property, family)</li> </ul> <p>Notes: While Aristotle also has a numbering system like Plato (called Bekker numbers if you really want to know), here I give the reading assignments instead in Book and Chapter numbers, which may be easier since Aristotle uses lots of very short chapters. So, for example, Bk.I, i-ix means read chapters 1-9 in Book I. The Penguin text uses the roman numerals so this is pretty straightforward.</p> |
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|    |          | <p>While I recommend that you peruse the entire Politics over the two weeks, the assignments do a good job of bringing out the core of Aristotle's theory. The page numbers are deceptive--about 40% of them are the italicized encapsulations by the editor, so this reads much faster than Plato. The summaries are sometimes useful and sometimes questionable--sometimes it seems that the editor who wrote them was way out of the mainstream in his interpretations. If pressed for time, skip the encapsulations rather than the main text.</p> <p>The Politics are probably a series of lecture notes taken by Aristotle's students, which makes them either more straightforward or more pedantic than Plato, depending on your own preferences. In any case, read with an eye to discovering not simply what Aristotle says about politics (which in many instances has become dated), but his method of thinking about politics.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are humans "political animals"?</li> <li>2. How does Aristotle study politics? What is his method? Why does Aristotle start with the household? (Hint: the Greek for the "science of household management" is oeconomia.)</li> <li>3. How does Aristotle justify slavery? Why does he go wrong (presuming that you disagree with slavery.) Does he present any arguments that would be useful to an abolitionist?</li> <li>4. What is Aristotle's view of private property? How does this differ from Plato's? From laissez-faire capitalism (modern America's)?</li> </ol> |
| 16 | M Oct 17 | <p><b>“Aristotle and political ideals”</b></p> <p>Readings: Aristotle's Politics, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk II, i-v, ix (criticism of Plato's communism, the example of Sparta)</li> <li>• Bk. III, i,iv (the citizen)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In II i-iv Aristotle directly criticizes Plato's Republic. What is the basis of his critique? Do you think his criticism is fair?</li> <li>2. For those of you with some background in one of the social sciences, compare Aristotle with a modern social scientist. What are the similarities and differences in their methods? Is his analysis of Sparta a "case study?" What does he learn from Sparta?</li> <li>3. Is there such a thing as an ideal “citizen” or is the goodness of a citizen relative to the situation? Is it the same with being a “good man?” Compare Aristotle's position with Plato's.</li> </ol>   |

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| 17 | W Oct 19 | <p><b>“Aristotle’s comparative politics”</b></p> <p>Readings: Aristotle's Politics, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book III, Chapter vii (classification of constitutions)</li> <li>• Book IV, Chapters i-iv, xi-xii; (political theory, classifications of constitutions, merits of middle class)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does Aristotle's definition of "constitution" differ from a modern American definition? What advantages does the Greek notion of constitution hold over our own?</li> <li>2. How does Aristotle classify constitutions? How useful are these classifications? What causes constitutions to change and to degenerate from one form into another? Do you agree with his theory of cyclical change?</li> <li>3. What does Aristotle say is the best constitution for “the majority of men?” How is his view of a “second best state” different from Plato’s ideals in the Republic?</li> <li>4. What does Aristotle think of the middle class? What is its role in building a stable society?</li> </ol>   |
| 18 | M Oct 24 | <p><b>“Aristotelian Controversies”</b></p> <p>Readings: Aristotle's Politics, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book V, Chapters viii-ix, xi; (stability, Aristotle as an amoral theorist)</li> <li>• Book VI, Chapter ii; (democracy, liberty, equality)</li> <li>• Book VII, Chapter xiii-xvi; (the state, sex, abortion, and eugenics)</li> <li>• Book VIII, Chapter i-ii; (education)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is Aristotle's writing in Book V Ch. xi amoral or immoral? Do you think it is a good idea to give advice to tyrants simply as an academic exercise? What is the ethical responsibility of a political theorist?</li> <li>2. What does Aristotle have to say about democracy and liberty? What about his description of the common characteristics of democracies? How many of those characteristics do you see in modern political regimes? How democratic are we?</li> <li>3. What do you think of Aristotle's eugenics? How should we understand his recommendations to abandon crippled infants? Is his discussion of abortion persuasive to you? Are you surprised to find the same debate taking place 2500 years ago?</li> <li>4. What do you make of Aristotle’s discussion of marriage, age, pregnancy, extramarital sex and the like? Do you note a rather patriarchal attitude or is this objective analysis given the understanding of biology in his day?</li> <li>5. What is the task of education, according to Aristotle?</li> <li>6. What is the task of political theory for Aristotle? How does this differ from Plato? From Thucydides? From Aristophanes? Is</li> </ol> |

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|    |          | politics "a practical science rather than a theoretical one?"   |
| 19 | W Oct 26 | <p><b>“Chinese History and Confucian Culture”</b></p> <p>Readings: The Book of Mencius:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. I A (all)</li> </ul> <p>Notes: We are reading most of the text, which is organized into 7 books, each of which has an “A” half and a “B” half, and then each half numbers its stories. So “II.A.6” means Book II, Part A, the sixth section (numbered 6.). This translation is excellent and the text reads more easily than some of our other texts.</p> <p>Mencius (Meng Zi) was born about 370 BCE, about 175 years after Confucius (Kong Zi). While the name Confucius is more famous, it is likely that the world would have forgotten Confucius were it not for Mencius, who interpreted Confucian philosophy and produced what eventually became the “orthodox” version of Confucian thought. Some would say that Mencian Confucianism was among the most important influences in Chinese culture until the beginning of the twentieth century, more than 2200 years later.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why is Chinese thought not commonly studied as “political theory?” Is it purely a Western bias, or does this tell us something interesting about Chinese history and culture? About political theory?</li> <li>2. In what ways does ancient Chinese culture make Mencius's writing distinctive? If Mencius's book were circulated in Greece or Rome in his own day, what do you think the reaction would have been?</li> <li>3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Mencius's literary methods? For what purposes are parables (in general) well-suited?</li> <li>4. What (IA)does Mencius suggest is the responsibility of a King? Are Chinese Kings supposed to be autocrats? What restrains them? What is a “true King?”</li> <li>5. What seems to be Mencius’s attitude toward “profit,” “conservation,” and inequality?</li> </ol> |
| 20 | M Oct 31 | <p><b>“Mencius as a political advisor”</b></p> <p>Readings: The Book of Mencius:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. IB (all)</li> <li>• Bk. II A (all)</li> <li>• Bk. IIIA (all)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p>  |



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|    |         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does Mencius have to say about regicide (I.B.8.3)?</li> <li>2. Do you see a parallel between Mencius’s discussion of expertise (I.B.9.1-9.2) and Plato’s?</li> <li>3. What is the “Way?” What is the purpose of the story of the farmer from Sung (II.A.2.16.)</li> <li>4. What would Mencius say to someone who blamed his difficulties on bad luck?</li> <li>5. Review Mencius’s discussion of “the four virtues of the heart” in II.A.6.1-6.7. What is his theory about whether these virtues are learned or innate?</li> <li>6. Mencius gives Duke Wen advice about government in III.A.3.1-3.20 that discusses in detail how to treat the common people, how to tax them, how to organize the land. What kind of economic system does he suggest? Why is competent demarcation of land and taxation necessary for “benevolent” government?</li> <li>7. What does Mencius have to say about education (III.A.4.8)?</li> <li>8. What does Mencius have to say about the free market (III.A4.17-18)?</li> </ol> |
| 21 | W Nov 2 | <p><b>“Mencius on the Kingly Way”</b></p> <p>Readings: The Book of Mencius:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. III.B.9</li> <li>• Bk. IV.A.1,2, 9, 14</li> <li>• Bk. IV B (all)</li> <li>• Bk. V.A.4,5</li> <li>• Bk V.B.3</li> </ul> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the conflict Mencius refers to in III.B.9.9 between Yang Zhu and Mozi? How is this conflict reflected in his criticism of the inequality of the King’s realm?</li> <li>2. What is the proper relationship between “goodness” and “laws” IV.A.1.3?</li> <li>3. What does Mencius think of war? IV.A.14.1-3.</li> <li>4. What view of human nature is implied by Mencius at IV.B.1.12 and then at 19.1-2?</li> <li>5. In V.A.4.2 Mencius gives a theory for how to interpret a text. Do you agree with him? Would you apply this same theory to other texts?</li> <li>6. What is Mencius’s advice about friendship?</li> </ol>  |
| 22 | M Nov 7 | <p><b>“Mencius on Human Nature”</b></p> <p>Readings: The Book of Mencius:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bk. VI A (all)</li> <li>• VII A (all)</li> <li>• VIIB (all)</li> </ul>  |

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|  |  | <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is Mencius's view of human nature? How would you compare it with the views of Plato? Aristotle? The Bible?</li> <li>2. What are the four central virtues, and how does each contribute to a good society (VI.A.6.1-8)?</li> <li>3. Does VI.A.7.2 remind you of anything? If not, reread it after we read the parables of Jesus.</li> <li>4. What should be the roles of government and of education for the people?</li> <li>5. What does Mencius mean by the parable of Ox Mountain (VI.A.8.1)?</li> <li>6. Read VII.A.4.1-3 carefully and consider comparisons to both Socrates and Jesus. What could account for the similarities?</li> </ol> |
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| 23 | W Nov 9 | <p><b>“Roman History and Political Culture”</b></p> <p><b>Note: Campus closed M Nov 11 Veteran’s Day</b></p> <p>Readings: Cicero “On Government”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chapter 1 “Against Verres ” all;</li> <li>2. Chapter 7 “The Phillipics” against Antony (all).</li> <li>3.</li> </ol> <p>Notes: Cicero is one of the very few great political thinkers who also rose to the highest political office in the land—in his case Consul of Rome. He was one of history’s greatest lawyers and also had a prominent political career as an orator--prominent enough that he was put to death by Antonius. Thus he lived long enough to see Rome's ancient republican institutions crumbling under a tyranny. He died in 43 BCE.</p> <p>While Cicero is rarely thought to be a brilliantly original political theorist, he was a gifted synthesizer who defended the republican institutions of Rome. He also is a fairly easy read. His style of oratory is often identified as the world's best model for stylish, elegant, writing.</p> <p>In these selections you will read some of Cicero’s best oratory, representing a courageous stance, and a defense of his cherished political values. Cicero was a conservative, which in his day meant he wanted to retain the old Roman republican ways and not give way to the newer model of rule by a powerful and charismatic single leader, like Caesar—and certainly not the vulgar bully Antony. You also might be interested to know that he was killed for what he said in these selections. The introductions in the text are succinct and useful.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How is the style of Ciceronian oratory linked to the substance of his theory? Try reading some of Cicero out loud to get the effect, even in translation, of his short, crisp, powerful language.</li> <li>5. What arguments does Cicero advance against autocracy and for republican values? Do any of these arguments continue to hold today?</li> <li>6. How does Cicero go about prosecuting Verres for malfeasance of</li> </ol> |
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|    |          | <p>public duty?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Would you hire this man to be your lawyer?</li> <li>8. Can you see why the Philippics are called “the greatest of all political pamphlets” by the editor? What political values can you identify that Cicero is defending? How should a statesman go about defending his country from an internal coup or autocracy?</li> <li>9. Looking below the rhetoric, what is wrong with rule by one man? Why are there still parts of the world today ruled by men like Mark Antony?</li> <li>10. How would the viciousness of Cicero’s rhetoric stack up against what you might hear today in Congress or on a Fox News interview? Given that Rome at the time was in a civil war, does this say anything important about the state of American politics today?</li> <li>11. What does Cicero have to say about law in his speech?</li> <li>12. Why was it considered dishonorable for a Roman leader to have an armed guard?</li> <li>13. Cicero talks much of slavery and of liberty. (For example, p. 382.) What does he really mean?</li> </ol>  |
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| 24 | M Nov 14 | <p><b>“Cicero and the ideal state”</b></p> <p>Reading: Cicero “On Government”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4 “On the State” (all)</li> <li>• Chapter 5 “On Laws” (all).</li> </ul> <p>Notes: Cicero tells us what he believes the ideal Roman state would be. He puts his theory in the form of a discourse and a dialogue, but the literary complexity of this creation is much simpler than Platonic dialogues. Cicero’s characters more or less put forward Cicero’s ideas in a straightforward fashion.</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you agree with Cicero that the success or failure of states depends upon the people and the leaders having a sense of "public duty?" Does our nation depend upon this principle, or does it rest upon some other principle? What about our economic system? Can one live a good life apart from the community?</li> <li>2. How would Cicero respond to the charge that "politics is a dirty business"?</li> <li>3. What is law? Is law natural or arbitrary? What is the position of law in society?</li> <li>4. Do all countries prefer to me unjust masters rather than just slaves? What does Cicero say makes for a just war?</li> <li>5. Is democracy the best form of government?</li> <li>6. How is “balance” the essential ingredient in Cicero’s republican laws?</li> <li>7. How should Senators behave? How should assemblies of the people behave?</li> </ol> |

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| 25 | W Nov 16 | <p><b>“The political, historical, and literary environment of Jesus”</b></p> <p>Readings: Selections from the New Testament of the (Christian) Bible, New Oxford annotated recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 4:1-33</li> </ul> <p>Notes: As with the Hebrew Bible, you are to examine these texts to determine what political implications they contain. Most of these short passages represent parables and sayings that followers attributed to Jesus; regardless of your religious views it is possible to consider these statements from the standpoint of what they imply for ethics, politics, and behavior in a society.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did early Christianity find a way of deciding what to do when politics and religion came into conflict?</li> <li>2. Why didn't Jesus become a great politician the way David did? According the accounts we have of him, what did he think of politics?</li> <li>3. What attitude did Jesus appear to take towards wealth and property? Is Christianity compatible with capitalism?</li> <li>4. What is Jesus's view of human nature, so far as we can glean from these texts?</li> <li>5. Why does Jesus speak in parables? What are the advantages and disadvantages of religious/ethical education conducted in this manner? (See Mark:4.)</li> </ol> |
| 26 | M Nov 21 | <p><b>“Social and Political implications of Jesus's ideas”</b></p> <p>Readings: Selections from the New Testament of the (Christian) Bible, New Oxford annotated recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matthew 5 all; 6:19-24; 19:23-30; 22:15-40</li> <li>• Luke 6:12-27; 10:25-37; 22:24-27</li> <li>• John 13:1-20</li> </ul> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare Matthew 5:3 (in the famous “Sermon on the Mount” with Luke 6:20. Can you see why the reference to poverty in Luke is much more politically explosive than the reference in Matthew? What might account for the differences between the two?</li> <li>2. What would a king or ruler think of Matthew 6:24? (Skipping ahead, you might compare this to Paul's Romans:13:1-7.) Does Christianity threaten the state, as the Romans seemed to think?</li> <li>3. What does Jesus seem to think of worldly authority figures?</li> </ol>  |
| 27 | M Nov 28 | <p><b>“Paul and Institutionalized Christianity”</b></p> <p>Readings: Selections from the New Testament of the (Christian) Bible,</p>   |

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|    |          | <p>New Oxford annotated recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James 2 all; 5 all;</li> <li>• Acts, 5:17-42; 15:1-29; 17:16-34</li> <li>• Romans, 13:1-7</li> <li>• 1Corinthians, 12 all; 13 all; 15 all</li> </ul> <p>Notes: Most of these readings are attributable to early followers of Jesus’s teachings (especially Paul) who sought to institutionalize Christianity as a religion. Romans and Corinthians are letters written by Paul, who was a literate Greek speaking (Roman citizen) lawyer, to early churches in an effort to organize them around standard doctrines. Many theologians consider Paul to be the founder of Christianity as a separate, organized religion.</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you find the ideas of Paul and of Jesus consistent when it comes to their views of ethics and politics? In particular, how would you compare the way they treat law? What about James and Jesus?</li> <li>2. How can Christianity's "other worldly" philosophy be resolved with the "real world" needs of social and political life? In particular, consider the ways in which Christian community differs from community for the Hebrews, Chinese, and Greeks.</li> <li>3. In what ways are early Christian political thought similar and dissimilar to that of the Hebrew Bible?</li> <li>4. One of the great conflicts of Christianity has, for many centuries, been over the apparent disagreement over the relative importance of “faith” and of “works” that some say begins with the discussion in James 2:18-26. Can you see how Christians who put more emphasis on “faith” and their spirituality might have a different attitude toward political life than those who put more emphasis on doing good “works” in this world?</li> </ol> |
| 28 | W Nov 30 | <p><b>Augustine: Overview</b></p> <p>Reading: Selections from Augustine City of God; online text University of Virginia:<br/> <a href="http://web.archive.org/web/20080914045227/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/to/c/modeng/public/AugCity.html">http://web.archive.org/web/20080914045227/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/to/c/modeng/public/AugCity.html</a></p> <p>Note: There are 22 books and each is divided into chapters that are actually only about a paragraph each. Read the following:<br/> Book 1, chapters 1, 3, 32-35;<br/> Book 4 chapters 3-4<br/> Book 5 chapters 1, 24<br/> Book 14, chapter 28<br/> Book 15, chapter 1<br/> Book 19 chapters 4-7, 11-13, 21, 24, 25, 27.</p>  |

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| 29         | M Dec 5  | <p><b>“Course Conclusion”</b></p> <p>Reading: none.</p> <p>Grand summary of the course; course evaluation; study guide for final.</p> |
| Final Exam | M Dec 12 | 9:45-12:00  |

## University Policies

Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs **maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.** You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP’s [Syllabus Information web page](#) at

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

### Academic integrity

In particular, here are a few issues that have come up in courses like this one before:

*Plagiarism* is a topic that can be confusing to uninformed students. For papers that you write outside of class, you should credit every source you consult by listing it in a bibliography, **whether you quote the source or not**. Any source you paraphrase, précis, quote or summarize must be directly credited with a footnote of some sort to prove that you are not attempting to take credit for someone else’s work—**note that this is not only direct quotes**. In this course some footnoting shortcuts will be offered to make your job easier, but the basic principle of always giving credit to the sources you consult never changes. Note in particular that use of online sources qualifies in the same way as consultation with any other source—internet materials must be fully cited if you have consulted them. I suggest you take the excellent tutorial on plagiarism available at our Library’s website:

<http://libguides.sjsu.edu/plagiarism>

**“Recycling” papers from other courses, even if they are your own original work, is not acceptable.** The library tutorial calls this “self-plagiarism.” If you have written a paper on a similar topic I am willing to consult with you to find ways to adjust course requirements to incorporate, expand, and build on your previous work. Papers submitted to this class are expected not only to be original to you the author, but original to this particular class.

*Collaboration.* Students may collaborate in their studies and are encouraged to do so. However, no collaboration during in-class exams or quizzes will be allowed. In their studies, collaborating students should not go so far that they memorized answers cloned from a single model.

*Cellphone* usage during quizzes and the final is strictly prohibited.