

**MACHIAVELLI**  
Deep Springs College  
Term 6 2021  
Daniel Schillinger, Visiting Professor

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## **Course Description**

In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx writes: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it.” While Marx may be right about classical philosophers and theologians such as Plato and Augustine, he is dead wrong about early modern thinkers. I have in mind, in particular, the Florentine political philosopher and statesman, Niccolò Machiavelli. In the *Prince*, Machiavelli castigates ancient and Christian thinkers who understand political life in light of imaginations or professions of the political best; by contrast, Machiavelli takes his bearings from “the effectual truth,” the truth redefined in terms of efficacious power. Moreover, in the preface to his other masterwork, the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli describes himself as a second Columbus, a Columbus of the mind. Could it be that Machiavelli intends for his work to have a similarly world-shaping effect? In this Term 6 course, we will immerse ourselves in the philosophical, political, and moral revolution performed by Machiavelli’s writings. These texts are incisive, revelatory, revolutionary, and chilling in their careful attention to how rulers acquire and expand autocratic power, how ordinary people assert themselves in republics and hold rulers to account, and how religions and ideologies delimit political horizons, foreclosing or opening possibilities for change. In addition to the entirety of *The Prince* and selections from the *Discourses*, we will read Machiavelli’s uproarious comedy, *Mandragola*.

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## **Required Texts**

We will use the following volumes:

- 1) Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Translated by Harvey Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- 2) Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Discourses on Livy*. Translated by Harvey Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- 3) Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Mandragola*. Translated by Mera Flaumenhaft. Long Grove: Waveland, 1981.

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## **Course Expectations and Practices**

By far the most important expectation and requirement for this course is that you read the assigned texts carefully and prior to class. You should expect to read for at least two hours in preparation for each session. In this course, the only way out is through—that is, through the text with pen in hand. In addition, you will be expected to read the reflections circulated by your classmates and to arrive prepared to discuss them. You should also strive to attend every session. There are no excused absences except in the event of a documented illness or emergency; absences will severely decrease your participation grade. Most importantly,

during class, please try to discuss the texts and to engage with your classmates in a spirit of questioning, openness, and friendship. This seminar hinges on your conversation! For my part, I promise to be flexible and attentive. Please don't hesitate to talk to me outside class.

## **Marking Scheme**

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1) Reading Reflections (1 per week)	20 %
2) Paper 1 (1,500 words due at the end of week 3)	30 %
3) Paper 2 (1,500 words due at the end of week 6)	30 %
4) Attendance and Participation	20 %

## **Course Policies**

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- 1) You are required to do one reading reflection per week. Please bring your reflection to class and be ready to talk through it or to pose questions arising out of it. Although I think that we should be flexible about the length of these reflections, a good reflection will exceed two hundred words—but not five hundred—and it will aim to generate discussion.
- 2) Attendance is critical: any unexcused absence will lower your participation mark by 10%.
- 3) Late assignments will be penalized five percent for every day late. No student will receive credit for this course unless he or she completes both essays.
- 4) Academic integrity is expected, of course. Please refer to the Deep Springs Handbook.

### **Schedule of Readings**

**CLASS 1:** *The Prince*, Ep. Ded., Ch. 1-3; “Letter to Vettori”

**CLASS 2:** *The Prince*, Ch. 4-9

**CLASS 3:** *The Prince*, Ch. 10-15

**CLASS 4: Interlude (Criticizing Machiavelli):** Plato, *Rep.*, Book 1

**CLASS 5:** *The Prince*, Ch. 16-21

**CLASS 6:** *The Prince*, Ch. 22-26

**CLASS 7: Interlude (Interpreting Machiavelli):** Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman* (selections); Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (selections)

**CLASS 8:** *Discourses on Livy*, Ep. Ded., Pref., 1.1-10

**CLASS 9:** *Discourses on Livy*, 1.11-20, 25-30, 33-37, 44-49, 55-60

**CLASS 10:** *Mandragola*

**CLASS 11:** *Mandragola*

**CLASS 12: Interlude (Criticizing Machiavelli):** Montaigne, “Of Presumption”

**CLASS 13:** *Discourses* 1.27, 1.58, 2.2, 3.1, 3.9, 3.31, 3.49