

DIRECTED STUDIES: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT, SECTION 7

Yale University

Fall 2020

Course Information

Time: MW 2:30-3:45
Instructor: Daniel Schillinger
Email: daniel.schillinger@yale.edu
Office Hours: TH 10:30-12:00 and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

“A study of works of primary importance to political thought and intellectual history. Focus on the role of ideas in shaping events, institutions, and the fate of the individual. In the fall term, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. In the spring term, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Tocqueville, Emerson, Marx, Nietzsche, and Arendt.”

In other words, Historical and Political thought canvasses the full history of Western political thought with the aim of illuminating fundamental texts and questions. Reading Plato and Nietzsche, Aristotle and Arendt, Rousseau and Du Bois, we will participate in a titanic and thrilling conversation about the ends of human life for individuals and collectives. While we will observe characteristic divergences between ancients and moderns, Christians and Machiavellians, proponents of the Enlightenment and its critics, our primary aim is neither to tell a story about the evolution of ideas nor to identify what we take to be political truths. Rather, we want to inhabit the mind of each thinker, to see as he or she sees, from the inside. Even more importantly, we will approach the history of political thought as a conversation animated by fundamental questions—that is, as a kind of Platonic dialogue writ-large. Questions that we will take up include the following: What is the best regime? How does political activity contribute, if at all, to human flourishing? Is wisdom title to rule? What is the role of power in domestic and international politics? What are the arguments for and against democratic citizenship? Should the state tolerate a variety of religious ideals and practices? What is freedom? If modern political life is characterized by alienation and injustice, then what has gone wrong, and what would constitute progress? Should we reconsider ancient political ideals or practices?

By immersing ourselves in our chosen texts, and by working through the texts in both conversation and writing, we will cultivate excellence in textual analysis and interpretative argumentation. In fact, these texts require immersive reading, writing, and reflection, because they are as carefully written as they are philosophically rich. Finally, through our engagement with the untimely and alien political thought of the past, we may hope to gain critical distance on our own political horizons and beliefs.

Required Texts

Please purchase personal copies of the following texts. While limited copies are available at the Yale University Bookstore, in light of quarantine procedures and much else, it may make sense for you to buy the texts online. Powell's, Bookshop, Abe Books, and Book Depository are good options. All other readings will be posted to the course's Canvas site.

- 1) Herodotus. *The History*. Translated by David Grene. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- 2) Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Rex Warner. New York: Penguin, 1971.
- 3) Plato. *Republic*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.
- 4) Aristotle. *The Politics*. 2nd ed. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- 5) Livy. *The Rise of Rome: Books 1-5*. Translated by T.J. Luce. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- 6) Tacitus. *Annals*. Translated by Michael Grant. New York: Penguin, 2013.
- 7) Augustine. *City of God*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- 8) Aquinas. *Treatise on Law*. Translated by Richard D. Regan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.

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, and perhaps for much longer, in preparation for each session. Read and read again! Take notes! In this course, the only way out is through—that is, through the text with pen in hand. You should also strive to attend every session. There are no excused absences except in the event of a documented illness or emergency. 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. Because we will conduct seminars over Zoom, your full attention and participation are more important than ever. Students who read carefully and participate enthusiastically will have every chance of success. For my part, I promise to be flexible, open, and attentive, especially during these strange, awful times. Please don't hesitate to talk to me about anything related to the course. You can email or call me (914-522-1657). I want to help you as much as I can.

Marking Scheme

1) Paper 1 (5 pages due Fri. Sep. 11 by 11:59 PM)	20 %
2) Paper 2 (5 pages due Fri. Oct. 16 by 11:59 PM)	20 %
3) Paper 3 (5 pages due Fri. Nov. 13 by 11:59 PM)	20 %
4) Final Exam	25 %
5) Attendance and Participation	15 %

Essays and Assessment Criteria

Each essay that you write for this course should satisfy the following criteria:

- 1) The essay clearly and directly responds to the prompt.
- 2) The essay contains a thesis-driven argument and a coherent structure (rather than a mere summary of one or more texts, a list of facts, or an absence of structure altogether).
- 3) The essay displays careful engagement with the course materials through its analysis of textual evidence and key concepts.
- 4) The essay eschews basic errors and achieves a polished writing style.

The third of these criteria is the most important: your essays should display your careful and sustained engagement with the course materials. Even so, “A” essays will satisfy each criterion listed above by exhibiting mastery of both the course content and the elements of the academic essay. “B” essays will fall short of mastery while attaining competence. “C” essays will satisfy these criteria to a minimal extent. “D” essays will not meet these criteria, though they will show some effort toward the composition of a solid paper. “F” essays will suggest an unacceptable lack of engagement with and effort on this assignment and in the course. In addition, essays should be double-spaced, written in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, and formatted according to an accepted style of citation (e.g., Chicago).

With each essay assignment, I will include an optional pre-draft assignment that will allow you to involve me in your writing process. Pre-drafts are non-graded writing assignments designed to introduce you to the academic essay and to sharpen your writing. The first pre-draft assignment will provide an occasion for you to offer a close reading of a crucial passage. The second pre-draft assignment will prompt you to compose a compelling and contestable thesis. The third and final pre-draft assignment will push you to locate evidence for your thesis and to build a coherent structure supported by clear transitions. While the pre-draft assignments are entirely optional, they will help you to write coherent, lucid, and original essays.

Participation and Presentations

Participation in class discussion is essential to this course. While participation should be consistent and energetic, it will be graded, ultimately, on the basis of its judiciousness and quality. In particular, before each class, use the posted discussion questions to guide your reading and to prepare for our conversation. You may also post—whatever you want!—on the Canvas discussion board. The discussion board should be a space for playful, low-stakes engagement with the texts: questions, reactions, comments on particular passages, even memes are welcome.

As a part of your participation in the course, you will be asked to give one brief presentation of a striking passage or theme at the end of a Wednesday session. Each presentation should be based on about 250 words of written analysis that aims to elicit conversation. You should email your written work to me by 11:59 PM on the Tuesday night prior to your presentation. We will arrange a presentation schedule during the first week of the course.

Extensions and Lateness

No extensions will be permitted in the absence of official documentation of a serious illness or an emergency submitted to me prior to the deadline. Late papers will be penalized one quarter letter grade for each day late. To be clear, a late paper that would have received an A- will receive a B+ if it is one day late, a B if it is two days late, and so on. If you anticipate that you will find it difficult to complete an assignment on time, please talk to me as soon as possible.

Honor System and Academic Integrity

I am serious about promoting academic integrity in this course; any kind of unauthorized assistance will not be tolerated. Please consult the definition of academic integrity in the Yale University Student Handbook. Of course, if you have questions about academic integrity, please ask me.

Accessibility and Religious Observance

I am committed to accessible and inclusive learning. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams. The same applies to accommodation for religious observance: contact me as soon as you can.

Schedule of Readings

Week of August 31 (week 1): Herodotus

(i) Herodotus, *History*, I.1-91; II.35-41; III.27-38

(ii) Herodotus, *History*, III.61-89; VI.94-120; VII.1-60, 99-105

Lecture: Stuart Semmel

Week of September 7 (week 2): Herodotus and Thucydides

(i) Herodotus, *History*, VII.129-63, 184-87; VII.201-VIII.125; VIII.140-144

(ii) Thucydides, *Pel War*, 1.1-1.23 (pp. 35-49); 1.66-1.97 (pp. 72-93); 1.125-1.146 (pp. 108-23).

Lecture: Norma Thompson

Week of September 14 (week 3): Thucydides

(i) Thucydides, *Pel. War*, 2.1-2.65 (pp. 124-64); 3.36-3.50 (pp. 212-23); 3.81-3.84 (pp.241-45); 5.84-5.116 (pp. 400-8)

(ii) Thucydides, *Pel. War*, 6.6-6.32 (pp. 412-29); 6.47-6.61 (pp. 439-49); 6.89-6.93 (pp. 466-70); 7.50-7.87 (pp. 510-537)

Lecture: Daniel Schillinger

Week of September 21 (week 4): Plato

(i) Plato, *Republic*, I-II

(ii) Plato, *Republic*, III-IV

Lecture: Terence Renaud

Week of September 28 (week 5): Plato

Reading and discussions: Plato, *Republic*

(i) Plato, *Republic*, V-VI

(ii) Plato, *Republic*, VII-VIII

Lecture: Steven Smith

Week of October 5 (week 6): Aristotle

(i) Aristotle, *Politics*, I; II, ch. 1-5

(ii) Aristotle, *Politics*, III

Lecture: Daniel Schillinger

Week of October 12 (week 7): Aristotle

(i) Aristotle, *Politics*, IV, ch. 1-13; V, ch. 1-5, 8-9

(ii) Aristotle, *Politics* VII, chap. 1-9, 13-15; VIII, ch. 1-2

Lecture: Isaac Nakhimovsky

Week of October 19 (week 8): Livy

(i) Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, (Author's) Preface; I.1-21, 46-60; II.1-13, 23-40, 54-61; III.44-58, 64-69|

(ii) Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, IV.1-7, 58-61; V (entire)

Lecture: Isaac Nakhimovsky

Week of October 26 (week 9): Polybius and Plutarch

(i) Polybius, I.1-6; III.1-6, 10-11, 30-32, 77-81; VI.1-18, 25-26, 36-39, 41-58; X.2; XI.19

(ii) Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*

Lecture: Stuart Semmel

Week of November 2 (week 10): Tacitus

(i) Tacitus, *Annals*, I (entire); IV.32-35;

(ii) Tacitus, *Annals* XIII.1-28; XIV.1-21, 29-39; XV.36-39, 44, 47-64

Lecture: Steven Smith

Week of November 9 (week 11): Augustine

(i) Augustine, *City of God*, I.4, 14-21; II.4-7; IV.3-4; V.1-25; VIII.9-11; XI.1; XII.1-14, 21-23; XIII.21

(ii) Augustine, *City of God*, XIV.1-6, 11-28; XV.1-6; XVIII.49-53; XIX. 7, 10-28

Lecture: Paul Freedman

Week of November 16 (week 12): Alfarabi and Maimonides

(i) Alfarabi, *The Political Regime, The Attainment of Happiness* (selections, handout)

(ii) Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (selections, handout)

Lecture: Paul Franks

Week of November 30 (week 13): Aquinas

(i) Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* Q 90-94 (pp. 1-43)

(ii) Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* Q 95-97 (pp. 44-69)

Lecture: Jennifer Herdt