

Foundations of Political Thought

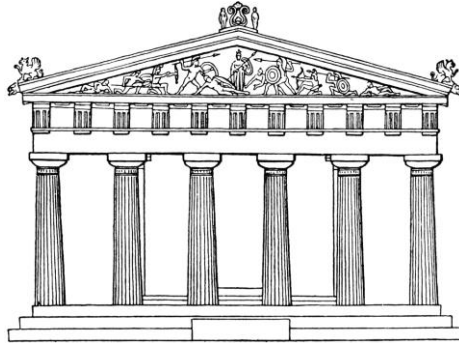
Colgate University

Instructor

Rachelle Walker, PhD.
rwalker@colgate.edu

Office Hours:

T/Th 10:00-11:30



Class

POSC 260
Fall 2021

Room:

Persson 109

Time:

T/Th 2:45-4:00

Class Description

This class goes straight to the heart of all political science, asking some of the most important questions that could ever be asked. What is the purpose of human beings – i.e., what are we for? How do we seek out what is good together – or how do we “do” politics? Where do justice, authority and power come from, and when are they legitimate? How do regimes shape the people that live within them, for better or for worse? All the motion and hubbub of everyday politics will be set aside as we step together into philosophy, that search for wisdom that precedes the sciences (including political science) and makes them possible. We’ll go back to the very beginning of the story and ask the fundamental questions about political life and human purpose, guided by major thinkers from Plato to the American Founders.

Required Texts

The following book is required for the class:

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *The Republic and the Laws*. Translated by Niall Rudd. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Translated by Harvey Mansfield. Chicago University Press, 1998.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise on Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on Inequality*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

Reading Packet.

Class Methodology and Requirements

The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Prior to every class session, it is expected that the student has read the assigned readings listed for that day.

- **Participation and Attendance (5%).** Do all assigned readings and be ready to contribute to the discussion.
- **Two Essays (40%; 20% each).** These are two response papers on the class readings; prompts will be given.
- **Midterm Exam (25%).** An exam on Weeks 1-7.
- **Final Exam (30%).** A final exam on the major themes of the course.

Late work will be accepted with a penalty of one grade level per day. If there is an unforeseen emergency that conflicts with your progress in the course, please contact the professor.

Grading Scale

93% A	73% C
90% A-	70% C-
87% B+	67% D+
83% B	63% D
80% B-	60% D-
77% C+	<60% F

Please contact the professor at any time to discuss your progress in the course. Grades for each assignment will be posted on Moodle as they are returned.

Academic Integrity

Needless to say, plagiarism (the use of someone else's work—a couple of sentences or a whole paper—without giving them explicit credit) will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of F on any piece of class work. See the Student Handbook for details. Similarly, cheating on an exam will receive an immediate F and a referral to the Dean. Avoid any temptation to cheat by starting early and contacting the professor for help if need be.

Learning Services

If you have a disability that prevents you from doing as well as you could in this class, be sure to contact Evelyn Lester, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services, to discuss your specific needs and set up arrangements with the professor. Evelyn's office is in the Center for Learning, Teaching and Research, and you can email her at elester@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

Classroom Etiquette

At all times, please act with respect toward the professor and toward your classmates. *Mentally set aside the entire class period as a time for pursuing greater knowledge of this subject.* Please no talking during lectures, no cell phones or other nifty electronic devices.

WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

I. What is Primary: The City or the Individual?

Week 1 – The Philosopher in the City

August 26

Welcome and Introduction

August 27

Plato, *Apology of Socrates*

Week 2 – The Search for the Good Life

August 31

Plato, *Apology of Socrates*

September 2

Plato, *Crito*

Week 3 – Happiness and Human Purpose

September 7

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I

September 9

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII

Week 4 – The City

September 14

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapters 1-2, and Book III, Chapters 1-5

September 16

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III, Chapters 6-13

Week 5 – Revelation

September 21

The Bible – Exodus Chapter 20 and Proverbs Chapters 1-3

September 23

Gospel of Matthew; Romans 13

Essay I Due Friday, September 24

II. What is Leadership: Virtue or Power?

Week 6 – The Statesman in the Republic

September 28

Cicero, *Republic*, Book I

September 30

Cicero, *Republic*, Book II

Week 7 – The Rule of Law

October 5

Cicero, *Republic*, Books III-VII; Cicero, *Laws*, Book I

October 7

Exam on Weeks 1-7

Midterm Exam on October 7

Week 8 – Political Power

October 12

Midterm Recess – No Class

October 14

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 1-8

Week 9 – Virtue Over Fortune

October 19

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 9-16

October 21

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 17-25

III. What is Good Government: Liberalism or Collectivism?

Week 10 – The Origin of Government

October 26

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters I-V

October 28

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters VI-IX

Week 11 – The Purpose of Government

November 2

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters X-XIII

November 4

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters XIII-XV

Week 12 – Human Nature is Historical

November 9

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* – Dedication and Introduction

November 11

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* – First Part

Week 13 – Engineering Citizens

November 16

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* – First Part and Second Part

November 18

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* – Second Part

Essay II Due Friday, November 19

Week 14 – Communism

November 30

Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

December 2

Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

IV. Conclusion: Political Theory and the American Regime

Week 15 – The American Founding

December 7

Declaration of Independence & Letters; Federalist #1 and #9

December 9

Federalist #10 and #51

Final Exam on Monday, December 13, 3-5pm