2018-10-28

BU Hub PO391 Classical to early modern political theory / PH453 Theories of society

CAS PO 391 Classical to Early Modern Political Theory
CAS PH 453 Theories of Political Society
Boston University
Fall, 2019

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of this course pertain to three BU Hub General Education Requirement categories: Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meaning; Ethical Reasoning; and Critical Thinking. They thus include the outcomes numbered below:

Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meaning

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of notable works in philosophical thought, make meaningful connections among them, and be able to relate those works to their own lives and those of others.
2. Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills, and possess the vocabulary to reflect upon, significant philosophical questions and topics, such as what constitutes a good life, right action, meaningful activity, knowledge, truth, and a just society.

Ethical Reasoning

1. Students will be able to identify, grapple with, and make a judgment about the ethical questions at stake in many major contemporary public debates, and engage in civil discussions about them with those who hold views different from their own.
2. Students will demonstrate the skills and vocabulary needed to reflect on the ethical responsibilities that face individuals in their public and private lives, as well as the ethical responsibilities that face those in positions of authority, leadership, and government. What are our responsibilities to the communities to which we belong? To communities identified as "other"? To future generations of humankind? And to stewardship of the Earth? Students will consider issues raised by both historical and contemporary events to address these questions.

Critical Thinking

1. Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, such as habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning processes.
2. Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

These learning outcomes will be assessed by four means: 1) two 75-minute in-class essay exams (during the sixth and the twelfth weeks of the semester); 2) one ten-page paper due after classes end; 3) electronic in-class multiple-choice questions and quizzes; 4) discussion in all classes conducted by the professor. Criteria for evaluation will include: evidence of comprehension of the reading, clarity of writing and of speech; analytical ability, use of examples, and effort.

Mondays & Wednesdays
2:30-3:45 p.m.
Room TBD

Professor J. A. Swanson
Department of Political Science
232 Bay State Road, #311C
Office hours: Mondays, 4:00-6:00 p.m. & by appointment
E-mail: jswanson@bu.edu
Mobile Phone/Text: 617-959-4948

Course Description

The focus of this course is the emergence and transformation of political philosophy from the 5th century, B.C. to the 16th century, which took place in the West. A general aim is to show that the great ideas put forth in this time period are not only worthy of study in their own right, but together constitute a continuous philosophical debate.

The course also aims to show that the philosophical debate inaugurated in early Greece is ongoing. The problems addressed by ancient, medieval, and early modern political philosophers are relevant to the public and private lives of human beings today. By reconstructing and examining the arguments of great minds, the class can participate in this debate.

Among the questions the course considers are: Is there a difference between knowledge and opinion, and is that difference relevant to the activity of politics and the question of who should govern? What is "philosophy," and should it have a role in a political order? If it should have a role or function, then what should that be? Is an understanding of human nature, or of nature more generally, requisite to good government? Should government undertake, direct, or encourage the moral education of citizens? If so, then what form or forms should moral or civic education take, and to what extent is its aim the transformation of human nature? Is punishment, or coercion in the form of law, an effective means of civic education? Is public speech or rhetoric? Is religion, specifically Christianity? What authority should a political order give to, or to what extent should a political order be guided by, the respective claims of reason and of revelation?

Related to the last question and central to the course is the concept of law. Is law simply a man-made device or does it have a natural or divine basis? Is there, in other words, a higher law or justice to which conventional law does, or should, appeal? If human beings should try to make their conventional law conform to the dictates of a natural or divine law or justice, to which do we owe primary allegiance--convention, or nature/divinity--if their dictates diverge? If there is no natural or divine higher justice, then what should the basis of law be? Power?

A new aspect of this course is the integration of art that depicts the historical context, experiences, and views of the philosophers studied. We will examine slides of art for insights that corroborate or go beyond the arguments of their texts, with a view to answering such questions as indicated above.

Required Texts

1) Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (David Ross's translation)
2) Aristotle, *The Politics* (Carnes Lord's translation, 1st or 2nd edition)
3) *The Political Writings of St. Augustine* (Gateway Editions, 1962)
4) Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics* (Baumgarth & Regan's edition)
5) Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Harvey Mansfield's translation, 1st or 2nd edition)

The books are available in paperback in the Course Book Department, Barnes & Noble, 660 Beacon Street. Please use the above translations for this course, for reference in class.

Format

Classes will discuss reading assignments and pose questions about the reading and related issues, seeking your response, either verbally or electronically, via TurningPoint. Accordingly, you are expected to come to each class having read the assignment for that day and to be ready to participate verbally and/or to use your ResponseWare App during class. Some of the questions posed during class will be selected from the sets posted on our PO391/PH453 Blackboard Learn (BBL) site, and some may be presented as quizzes, and your answers individually recorded; thus you may (and should) prepare answers in advance of classes to help you participate. *Even if you have not prepared for a class, you should attend! Come to listen—you may say, "just listening today" or "I pass," if you are put on the spot!* One incentive for doing so is that whatever occurs in a class may be pertinent to examinations.

Requirements and Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following distribution (percentages are approximate):

Attendance = 10%
Participation (verbal and electronic, via TurningPoint ResponseWare) = 10%
First 75-minute examination = 25%
Second 75-minute examination = 25%
Ten-page paper = 30%

Attendance, late arrivals, and early departures. Your attendance counts for ten percent of your course grade. Absences will be translated into a letter grade as follows: you are allowed one absence, regardless of the reason, without consequence to your attendance grade; after that, every absence (without a *documented* excuse) will lower your attendance grade by a "notch" (e.g., from an A to an A-). After two absences, then, your attendance grade would be A-, after three absences, B+, and so on. If you are late by more than fifteen minutes, or leave more than fifteen minutes early, then that would count as an absence; repeated late arrivals and early departures will be noted and lower your attendance grade. If you joined the course late, then your absences prior to registration will not be factored into your attendance grade. In short, if you show up all the time or miss just one class during the semester, then you would get an "A" for attendance.

Verbal participation. You should come to class prepared to participate, which means having read the pages assigned for that day, as indicated on the Timetable below. *Participation in every class, informed by the reading and also directly responsive to the question posed or issue under discussion, is the standard you should aim to meet. Never volunteering to answer a question, or never demonstrating familiarity with the assigned reading if called upon, cannot meet the minimum standard of trying to participate intelligently.*

Exams and Paper. The written requirements for the course include two seventy-five minute (one period) examinations and one ten-page paper. You cannot pass the course without completing all three requirements, regardless of your grades on two. *Both exams will consist of short answer and/or essay questions. Unless I announce otherwise,* ***all*** *course material—reading assignments, items posted on the Blackboard Learn site, class handouts, lectures, discussions, video lectures, films—may be relevant to exams.* To help you prepare for exams, class Power Point slides will be posted (within ten days of each class) on the Blackboard Learn course site. The paper due at the end of the course should discuss *Machiavelli and two of the other three philosophers focused on* (Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas) and should concern *one of the four topics posted on BBL*. Paper specifications are also posted on BBL.

Provisions will be made to accommodate disabilities with authorization from the Office of Disability Services.

Missed Exams

Do not count on being allowed to make up a missed exam. I will give a make-up exam only if you have documentation from a physician, relative, or legal authority of a serious injury, illness, or situation requiring your absence or attention. Make-up exams may be different from and more difficult than the original, and may not be returned until the end of the semester.

Missed Classes

If you miss a class, do not count on being informed of its contents by me or by your fellow classmates. Listening and taking notes are academic skills and each student's notes are his or her own work (though based on copyrighted material—see below), which he or she may choose to keep to himself or herself. For those who are accommodated and read other students' notes: Beware, they may not be comprehensive or accurate! Additionally, neither my office hours nor scheduled appointments should be used for the purpose of making up a missed class, with the exception of a documented excused absence, in which case I will upon request assist you with the missed material to the extent possible. That may not be done however in the case of multiple absences.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

It is your responsibility, as a student of Boston University, to know what kinds of activities constitute plagiarism and academic misconduct. To understand what these activities are and how B.U. sanctions them, please read the CAS Academic Conduct Code: http://www.bu.edu/academics/cas/policies/academic-conduct. *Consultation of secondary sources, including via the web, for summaries of, or commentary about, the assigned works, as a substitute for reading the assignments, is likely to mislead you and disadvantage your performance, and will be considered a violation of the instructions given for the successful completion of this course.*

In addition, the buying, selling, reproduction, and distribution, of PO391/PH453 course material provided or prepared by the instructor—such as the syllabus, reading questions, and Power Point lecture slides—as well as notes taken by students in class (because they reflect, however accurately or inaccurately, an agenda and material prepared by the instructor), are forms of academic misconduct inasmuch as such material is copyrighted by either Boston University and/or Professor Swanson. Students enrolled in the course are allowed—but, as noted above, are not obligated—to share with other enrolled students the course material.

Classroom Etiquette Regarding Electronic Devices

- The only device you may use in class is your phone, and only for the purpose of using your ResponseWare app to answer questions posed in class on TurningPoint slides
- You may **not** connect to the internet during class for any reason (to surf, email, text, tweet, Instagram, Facebook, or even to look up a word, name, or fact) unless I give you explicit instruction or permission to do so
- If you connect to the internet, then I will ask you to disconnect and for your attention

A Note on University Closings

If the university should officially close on a class day because of bad weather, a terrorism alert, or other circumstances, then please keep to the reading schedule indicated on the timetable, unless I tell you otherwise by a Blackboard Learn e-mail/announcement. If an exam is scheduled on the day of closure, then *assume that it will occur when the class meets next*. Claiming that you were not sure if the exam would take place when classes resumed will not excuse you from your obligation to take the exam.

Changes to the Course

I will try to avoid adjusting the schedule and the requirements of the course but may have to (due to university closings, illness, or what we actually accomplish in class) as we proceed. I will try to announce in class and/or by Blackboard Learn e-mail/announcement any changes to the course as much in advance as possible.

Professor's Contact and Availability Information

My office location and hours are at the top of the syllabus. In addition to my regular hours, I can usually stay after class (in the classroom or corridor) to talk, and will respond to requests for appointments. I can receive time-sensitive text messages on my cell phone, 617-959-4948, and can usually answer emails to jswanson@bu.edu within 48 hours. Please try to ask all substantive questions about the course material in class—not by email—so that the rest of the students can benefit from your question and discussion of the answer.

Your Availability

Please check your inbox daily for course-related messages. The content of emails will also appear as Announcements on the Blackboard Learn course site.

Timetable for PO 391/ PH 453 2019

Note: Reading assignments that are not from the main required books are posted on, or linked to, our Blackboard Learn site. I may also post on the site, or distribute in class, other items, such as current news articles. Such additional material should be considered *required* reading that may be relevant to exams, unless I announce otherwise. **The assignments below should be read *for* the day next to which they are listed.**

FIRST WEEK
Wednesday, September 4th: Introduction to Course

SECOND WEEK
Monday, September 9th: What is the Best Way of Life for a Human Being and Why?
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, chs. 1-5, 7-10, 13 (22 pages)
Wednesday, September 11th: What is Moral Virtue and How Do We Acquire It?
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II (18 pages)

THIRD WEEK
Monday, September 16th: Is Justice Natural or Human-Made?
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, chs. 1-7, 10 (21 pages)
Wednesday, September 18th: What Activity is the Most Satisfying of All and Why?
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X, chs. 6-9 (15 pages)

FOURTH WEEK

Monday, September 23rd: Why is Man a Political Animal?
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, chs. 1-7, 12-13; Book 2, ch. 1 [to 1261a4], chs. 7-8 [in ch. 8 skip lines 1268a15-b21] (18 pages)

Wednesday, September 25th: What are Types of Political Rule?
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, chs. 1-11 (20 pages)

FIFTH WEEK

Monday, September 30th: What are Advantages and Disadvantages of Those Types?
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, chs. 12-13, ch. 15 (from 1286a9)-ch. 17; Book 4, chs. 1-4 (20 pages)

Wednesday, October 2nd: **Does Democracy Pose Risks?**
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 4, chs. 5-12, Book 6 (from 1317a10)-ch. 7 (22 pages)

SIXTH WEEK

Monday, October 7th: How Should Citizens be Educated and Why?
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 7, chs. 1-3; 1330b32-1331a18; and ch. 13 (from 1331b40) –ch. 15 (15 pages)

Wednesday, October 9th: Exam on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*

SEVENTH WEEK

Monday, October 14th: No class. B.U. follows Monday schedule of classes tomorrow.

Tuesday, October 15th: Why are There Only Two Kinds of Human Society?
Political Writings of St. Augustine, Chapter I (except pages 24, "What is recorded" to page 27, "In short" and pages 32, "Cicero himself" to page 38, "This, then,") (34 pages)

Wednesday, October 16th: Why do Nations Rise and Fall?
Political Writings of St. Augustine, Chapter II, A., B. (pp. 57-64, 85-88) (24 pages)

EIGHTH WEEK

Monday, October 21st: Should We Admire the Romans? Why or Why Not?
Political Writings of St. Augustine, Chapter II, C. (30 pages)

Wednesday, October 23rd: Can War Be Just?
Political Writings of St. Augustine, Chapter III, B. & C. (30 pages)

NINTH WEEK

Monday, October 28th: What is the Basis of Law and What are its Attributes?
Thomas Aquinas, "Writings" excerpt on BBL & *On Law*, pp. 1-29 (32 pgs)

Wednesday, October 30th: What are Eternal Law, Natural Law, and Human Nature?
Thomas Aquinas, *On Law,* pp. 30-51 (22 pages)

TENTH WEEK

Monday, November 4th: How Should Human Laws be Made and Obeyed?
Thomas Aquinas, *On Law,* pp. 51-75 (25 pages)

Wednesday, November 6th: How are the Decalogue, Moral Virtue, and Grace Related?
Thomas Aquinas, *On Law,* pp. 76-96 & 5th Article on BBL (25 pages)

ELEVENTH WEEK

Monday, November 11th: Is There a Connection Between Natural Law and Natural Rights?
Thomas Aquinas, *On Law*, pp. 100-101, 173-85, 188-89, 190-95, 207-10 (26 pages)

Wednesday, November 13th: What are Absolute Human Rights?
Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights* [selections posted on BBL]

TWELFTH WEEK

Monday, November 18th: Exam on Augustine and Aquinas

Wednesday, November 20th: What Sort of Gift is *The Prince*?
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Intro., Appendix, Dedicatory Letter (24 pages)

THIRTEENTH WEEK

Monday, November 25th: What is a Natural Prince?
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. I-VII (29 pages)

Wednesday, November 27th: No class. Thanksgiving recess.

FOURTEENTH WEEK

Monday, December 2nd: What Characterizes the Art of Ruling?
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. VIII-XIV (27 pages)

Wednesday, December 4th: Do Ends Justify Means?
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. XV-XXV (41 pages)

FIFTHTEENTH WEEK

Monday, December 9th: **Do Ends Justify Means? Reconsidered**
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. XXVI (4 pages)
Work on paper

Wednesday, December 11th: What Should We Think About Machiavelli?
Watch and discuss film: "Machiavelli on Political Power" (28 minutes)
Complete first draft of paper

Date, time, and location to be determined: Ten-page paper due