

Spring 2021  
POLS 4010: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY TO MACHIAVELLI

MWF 10:20 AM – 11:10 AM  
301 Baldwin Hall

Dr. Ilya P. Winham ([iwinham@uga.edu](mailto:iwinham@uga.edu))  
Office: 304A Baldwin Hall  
Office Hours: by appointment

**ANCIENT POLITICAL THOUGHT  
FROM c6th BC GREECE TO c16th AD RENAISSANCE FLORENCE**

This course introduces students to foundational texts in ancient Greek, ancient Roman/early Christian, and early modern political thought. Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*, Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War*, Plato's *Apology*, Augustine's *City of God*, and Machiavelli's *Mandrake* were all written in response to the moral crisis of a world that was a battlefield, a world that was dictated by relations of force, a world continually dragged down by the hubristic acts of successive rulers, the massive destruction of war and other evils (e.g. plague, civil war, the lust for domination), a world in which the end justified the means and greatness was a question of power. All of these authors illuminate the moral, political, and human crisis of their time—and thus help us think about our own times.

We begin with Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, which is dominated by a narrative pattern of revenge. 'Revenge' in modern Western culture may seem a somewhat marginal concern, but in the hierarchical, competitive world of ancient Greece, where 'do good deeds to your friend, and do bad deeds to your enemy' is a commonly held moral principle, revenge is in many ways a social norm. In the *Oresteia*, however, as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the narrative of revenge is used to explore the nature of human action and obligation, as well as the broadest ideas of justice and transgression.

Then we turn to the Sophists, in particular Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* and teaching of rhetoric. The teaching of rhetoric and the fashion that it set gave rise to the problem of its relation to justice and truth. In the last quarter of the fifth century BC, a grave crisis developed, in the course of which all kinds of people exploited the teachings of the Sophists to justify resolutely immoralist points of view.

The crisis was not solely due to the influence of the Sophists. Many other circumstances contributed towards it, in the first place the events of the Peloponnesian War, which we know about because of Thucydides's monumental effort to write up the truth of the war. Every year Attica was invaded. Then, after a few years' respite, it found itself under partial occupation by enemy forces. Each year the death-toll rose. People's faith in the justice of the gods began to waver as they noticed that, in human society, it was the strong who triumphed. Such long, widespread wars are never conducive to the maintenance of moral values. As Thucydides remarked in *The Peloponnesian War*, "war, which removes the comforts of daily life, runs a violent school and in most men brings out passions that reflect their condition" (3.82). The war was compounded by other evils, with even more disastrous effects. First there was the plague, with its endless train of sudden, agonizing deaths. After the plague came the horrors of civil war, to which Thucydides devotes a long and brilliant analysis. Athens was also defending her empire in the war, and the propaganda put out by her enemies harped ceaselessly upon the unjust and tyrannical dominion that she exercised throughout Greece. The moral crisis that Thucydides diagnoses owes much to the Sophists, but even more to the war, plague, civil war, and empire.

Like Thucydides, Socrates carried out his military duties in the Peloponnesian War. Socrates was no Sophist, but he was often confused with them—which is precisely why Plato is at such pains to point out the differences between them in his *Apology*. Like the Sophists, Socrates loved to argue, define things more closely, and confound his interlocutors, but he opposed the Sophists's advice and goals. Plato himself does not rest until he has clearly defined and stigmatized all that the Sophists in general, and even 'the

Sophist' as a philosophical concept, represented. The distinction between Sophist and philosopher dictated the orientation of not only his own thought, but Greek thought in general. In the *Apology* we see Socrates's intervention in the spiritual and moral crisis of the late fifth century.

Next, we jump almost a thousand years to the fall of the ancient Roman Empire with St. Augustine's *City of God*. Augustine wrote the *City of God* in response to a specific historical event: the sack of the city of Rome in 410 AD by the Visigoths led by their king Alaric. A book that began as a polemic against pagan critics who blamed Christianity for the sack of Rome, becomes a broader reflection on a range of theological and political topics, from the nature of virtue to the glories of the heavenly city. Among other things, Augustine aims to show that Rome was never the city that could satisfy human hearts; only the city of God could do that. In reading Augustine, we must bear in mind that his political world was that of the late Roman Empire. He had to make sense of the suffering, death, rape, murder, and mayhem that had taken the entire Western world by surprise. In this context, Augustine set out to do, and could claim to have done, what no pagan god had done: provide the moral guidance of the whole community by laying the spiritual foundation of an utterly new Christian future.

Finally, Renaissance Florence. Though his great talent was for politics, Machiavelli clearly believed he was also a talented dramatist. His talents as a dramatist date back to his youth when he transcribed Terence's *Eunuchus* and made a rough translation of Terence's *Andria*. Machiavelli's play, *Mandrake*, is a comedy about the ruses used to seduce a young woman. In truth, however, none of the characters is fooled. All of them, from the wife to her husband, realize what is happening but use the seduction to their own advantage. As the corrupt friar remarks, "it's true that I've been duped; nonetheless, this duping is to my profit." By exposing the norm of how people interact with each other within the context of exercising their desires, needs, interests, and passions in the everyday life of the city, the play scathingly, if humorously, exposes the moral corruption of all its characters.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

- Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, translated by Peter Meineck (Hackett, 1998)  
[https://www.amazon.com/dp/0872203905/ref=cm\\_sw\\_em\\_r\\_mt\\_dp\\_hLC-Fb1VW1XH9](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0872203905/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_hLC-Fb1VW1XH9)
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by Martin Hammond (Oxford World's Classics, 2009)  
[https://www.amazon.com/dp/0192821911/ref=cm\\_sw\\_em\\_r\\_mt\\_dp\\_nMC-FbQS2J5EM](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0192821911/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_nMC-FbQS2J5EM)
- Augustine, *City of God*, translated by Henry Bettenson (Penguin Classics, 2003)  
[https://www.amazon.com/dp/0140448942/ref=cm\\_sw\\_em\\_r\\_mt\\_dp\\_FNC-FbG9A5ZQD](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0140448942/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_FNC-FbG9A5ZQD)

**\*\*Note:** I encourage you to buy only these editions. All other readings will be available on eLC.

## CLASS OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop skills of careful and critical reading.
- 2) Improve the ability to follow and assess arguments.
- 3) Enhance critical writing skills.
- 4) Gain knowledge about major ancient thinkers.
- 5) Re-examine many modern assumptions that we take too much for granted.

## CLASS FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

This course is a flipped, hybrid course to promote remote, online, asynchronous learning. It is organized by week, and each week consists of three kinds of activities:

- **Read:** Since this course is book-based, it is essential to keep up with the reading. The texts for this class are not quick reads; nor can you glance over their paragraphs to catch their main ideas. You must carve out enough time to read the assigned texts closely and carefully. Don't waste this opportunity.
- **View:** All the videos on eLC are required. You will watch my lectures as well as lectures by a few of the very best political theorists: Edith Hall, Bettany Hughes, Martha Nussbaum, and Danielle Allen.
- **Complete:** Complete assignments for each week (some weeks there is nothing for you to complete). You can work at your own pace, but you must adhere to the deadlines.

## CLASS ATTENDANCE

I will not be taking attendance. Nobody is required to come to class or to give a reason for not attending class. Everything essential will be delivered online.

Our MWF class sessions provide you with the opportunity to meet in-person to discuss the week's reading with me and your classmates. To allow for social distancing our room capacity is **11 students maximum**. In order to make sure no more than 11 students attend on any given day, you must sign up on eLC by using the Attendance Preferences widget on the "Course Home" page. If you intend to come to a particular class, you login to eLC and submit your class preference for a particular date. If you change your mind, no problem. To change your preference for a specific date, simply open that quiz and take it again. The system will automatically update with your most recent submission.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The assignments are listed below and also in the schedule of classes. Detailed directions for each assignment will be posted on eLC. You can expect meaningful feedback on assignments within 2 weeks of their due date. Your grades will also be posted on eLC.

Assignment	Points
Week 3 – 5-page Aeschylus Paper	20
Week 4 – Gorgias Deep Reading Exercise	10
Week 6 – Thucydides Deep Reading Exercise	10
Week 8 – Thucydides Assignment	10
Week 9 – 2-3 page Melian Dialogue Paper	10
Week 10 – Plato Assignment	10
Week 13 – 5-page Augustine Paper	20
Week 14 – Machiavelli Assignment	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Grading scale:** A >93 A- 90-93 B+ 87-90 B 83-87 B- 80-83 C+ 77-80 C 73-77 C- 70-73

**Due Dates:** Unless told otherwise, all assignments are due by **5 p.m. Friday on eLC**. You are welcome to turn them in earlier. All late work and make-up work is at the discretion of the instructor.

**Extra Credit:** There will be no opportunities for earning extra credit this semester.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Academic Honesty:** The University's Academic Honesty Policy ("A Culture of Honesty," available at <http://honesty.uga.edu/index.html>) defines scholastic honesty as "the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed." Academic honesty is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, will result in disciplinary action.

**Coronavirus:** Governor Cuomo said it best: "Now in reopening, we have to actually double-down on our diligence." If people continue to use hand sanitizer, stay away from large gatherings, wear masks, and stay physically distanced, the virus spread will be contained. If people do not follow these guidelines, the virus will spread out of control. Unless you are in the hospitals or in the hardest-hit communities, the coronavirus may seem invisible and abstract, but it is real and deadly. More than 375,000 Americans have died (that is 1 in every 1000 Americans – at the beginning of the fall semester 170,000 had died, or 1 in every 2000 Americans).

The coronavirus doesn't spread by itself, you spread it by doing such things as breathing, talking, and laughing. Therefore, it is crucial to wear a face mask, especially when you are inside. **Face masks in public places, including classrooms, are required.** Wearing a face mask is in addition to and not a substitute for maintaining six feet social distancing. Anyone not wearing a face mask over their mouth and nose will be asked to wear one or to leave the classroom.

In all public spaces in Baldwin Hall (including stairwells, halls, offices, bathrooms, classrooms, and labs), **please maintain six feet between yourself and others.** The seating capacity in Baldwin 301 has been modified to allow for social distancing. Please sit only in the designated seats. If you want to spend time talking to somebody face-to-face, please do it outside Baldwin Hall or online.

If you know or have reason to believe that you have been exposed to the coronavirus, or are not feeling well, communicate this to me by email and please do not come to class. Use Dawgcheck ([dawgcheck.uga.edu](http://dawgcheck.uga.edu)) to report your symptoms and schedule an appointment with the University Health Center (706-542-1162).

***Mental Health and Wellness Resources:*** *If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.*

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

*This schedule is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary and are considered further elaborations of the original course. Remaining in this course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.*

**Drop/Add Period** – Wed., Jan. 13-Wed., Jan. 20

**NO CLASS MON., JAN. 18 – MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY**

- Read: This document (the syllabus)
- Recommended reading:* M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1983)
- View: Nothing
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 1** – Fri., Jan. 22 – Fri., Jan. 29

- Read: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*
- View: Agamemnon I, II, III, IV, V, Ralph Williams on the cycle of violence in the *Oresteia*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97C60exFH6A> (it gets better after the first 15 minutes), and Martha Nussbaum, “The Fragility of Goodness” (beginning-7:40): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWfK1E4L--c>
- Transcript: <https://billmoyers.com/content/martha-nussbaum/>
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 2** – Mon., Feb. 1 – Fri., Feb. 5

- Read: Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*
- View: Libation Bearers I and II
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 3** – Mon., Feb. 8 – Fri., Feb. 12

- Read: Aeschylus, *The Furies*
- View: The Furies I and Edith Hall, “On the challenges of conflict resolution in classical Athens”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDz00BQV8I>
- Complete: Aeschylus Paper

**Week 4** – Mon., Feb. 15 – Fri., Feb. 19 (Wed., Feb. 17 is an Instructional Break day)

- Read: Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*
- View: Sophists I and Bettany Hughes, “Helen of Troy” (you may stop after the first 50 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4T3Itt8mgs>
- Complete: Deep Reading Exercise

**Week 5** – Mon., Feb. 22 – Fri., Feb. 26

- Read: Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*
- View: Gorgias I
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 6** – Mon., March. 1 – Fri., March 5

- Read: Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Bk. 1
- View: Thucydides I, II, III, and IV
- Complete: Deep Reading Exercise

**Week 7** – Mon., March. 8 – Fri., March 12 (Fri., March 12 is an Instructional Break day)

- Read: Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Bk. 2
- View: Thucydides V, Edith Hall, “The Greatest Speech of all Time: Pericles’ Funeral Oration”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=NzpRgD4H8V4>,  
and Danielle Allen, “What to Do with Sound-Bites: On Politics and Propaganda in the 21st Century”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4k1TN7WRL4>
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 8** – Mon., March 15 – Fri., March 19

- Read: Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Bks. 3-4
- View: Thucydides VI
- Complete: Thucydides Assignment

**Week 9** – Mon., March 22 – Fri., March 26

- Read: Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Bk. 5
- View: TBD
- Complete: Melian Dialogue Paper

**Week 10** – Mon., March 29 – Fri., April 2

- Read: Plato, *Apology*
- View: Socrates I, II, III, and  
Bettany Hughes, “Genius of the Ancient World – Socrates”:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HprauM9y\\_dA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HprauM9y_dA)
- Complete: Deep Reading Exercise

**Week 11** – Mon., April 5 – Fri., April 9

- Read: Augustine, *City of God*, Bks. I and II (all, but especially 1-4, 6-7, 11-14, 16-23)
- View: Augustine I, II, and III
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 12** – Mon., April 12 – Fri., April 16

- Read: Augustine, *City of God*, Bks. III (1, 9-14, 20-21, 31), IV (1-4, 6-8, 12, 15, 18-23, 25, 26, 28-30, 33), and V (1, 8-19, 21, 24-26)
- View: Augustine IV and V
- Complete: Nothing

**Week 13** – Mon., April 19 – Fri., April 23

- Read: Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XIX
- View: Augustine VI
- Complete: Augustine Paper

**Week 14** – Mon., April 26 – Fri., April 30

- Read: Machiavelli, *Mandrake*
- View: Mandrake I and UGA’s Performance of the *Mandrake*
- Complete: Machiavelli Assignment

Mon., May 3 – Last Class

Tue., May 4 – Reading Day

Mon., May 17 – Grades Due