

Classics of Social and Political Thought I

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100, Sect. 7
University of Chicago, Autumn 2023

Instructor
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Writing Tutor
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Tuesday & Thursday 2:00–3:20
Wieboldt Hall 310C

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30–1:30 or by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is the first course in a year-long sequence about the nature and purpose of political life. Among other things, we will consider why human beings live in political communities; whether there is a distinctively human form of social life; the grounds on which a political community is entitled to use force on its own citizens; and whether it should allow its citizens to pursue their own conception of happiness. In the attempt to answer these questions, we will meditate on the relationship between virtue and happiness, the difference between education and indoctrination, the tension between personal happiness and the common good, and more. Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Machiavelli will be our guides.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To better understand the nature of human political existence.
2. To become better readers of difficult and controversial texts. First and foremost, this means learning to identify, outline, and assess arguments in the text.
3. To become better writers of claim-driven and evidence-based essays.
4. To become better at listening to the questions, claims, and arguments of other students, and responding to them in a philosophically productive manner.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation. [25% of final grade]
 - a. Meet with me in office hours at least once before the end of Week 5.
 - b. Attend the writing workshops with Elena in Weeks 2 and 4.
 - c. Meet once with Elena before submitting your 2nd paper.
 - d. Come to each class prepared to participate in a discussion of the reading assignment. This requires that you have read the text in advance and taken notes on it, and that you contribute questions and comments during class discussion.

- e. Post a one-paragraph reflection to Canvas for every class except those for which argument outlines have been assigned.
2. Three argument outlines, graded pass/fail. [15% of final grade]
3. Essay 1: 1,000–1,200 words. [30% of final grade]
4. Essay 2: 1,200–1,500 words. [30% of final grade]

ABSENCES

Class discussion is essential for understanding the course material and prepares you for your papers. You must attend all classes, except those that conflict with a religious observance. After two absences (excused or unexcused), you will lose a full letter from your participation grade for every absence after your first two. You will be ineligible for a letter grade for the course after your fifth absence and must request a W.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is a major breach of the University of Chicago's academic code of conduct and will be dealt with seriously. Plagiarism includes (a) submitting someone else's work as your own, (b) referring to someone else's work without proper citation, (c) submitting work that you have used for a different course, and (d) submitting an essay generated by ChatGPT or a similar AI tool. The University of Chicago takes plagiarism very seriously and depending on the case, it may result in failing the course and/or referral to the University for disciplinary action. At minimum, it will result in a failing grade on the assignment. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please consult the University of Chicago's *Student Manual of University Policies & Regulations*.

You are allowed to use AI tools for brainstorming and research. Be warned, however, that its answers are not generally up to academic standards, and are often incorrect.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices are not permitted in class unless you have written permission from the University.

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by [Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

Phone: (773) 702-6000

Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu

LATE ESSAYS

Essays will lose one third of a letter grade for every day that they are late. You are permitted one 24 hour extension for the quarter but must let me know in advance.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore. Please use these editions of the texts to aid in the in-class discussion of specific passages.

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Bloom (Basic Books, 2016)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Reeve (Hackett, 2017) [orange cover]

Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. Regan, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2003)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Mansfield, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) can be found on Canvas.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1

Tuesday, September 26 Introduction – no reading assignment

Thursday, September 28 Plato, *Republic*, Book I

Week 2

****First Writing Workshop, date TBA**

Tuesday, October 3 Plato, *Republic*, Book II to Book III, 394e

****Assignment: argument outline**

Thursday, October 5 Plato, *Republic*, Book III, 394e to Book IV, 433b

Week 3

Tuesday, October 10 Plato, *Republic*, Book IV 433b to Book V, 463a

Thursday, October 12 Plato, *Republic*, Book V 463a to Book VI, 497b

Week 4

****Second Writing Workshop, date TBA**

Tuesday, October 17 Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, 497b to end of Book VII

Thursday, October 19 Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII to Book IX, 580a

Week 5

Tuesday, October 24 Plato, *Republic*, Book IX, 580a to end of Book X

Thursday, October 26 *Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (entire). (PDF)

****Essay 1 Due Sunday, Oct. 29, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 6

Tuesday, October 31 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I.

****Assignment: argument outline**

Thursday, November 2 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III.1-13.

Week 7

Tuesday, November 7 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III.14-18; Book IV.1-2, 4-9, 11-12; Book V.1, 8-9.

Thursday, November 9 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII.1-5, 7, 9, 13-15.
*Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X.6-9. (PDF)

Week 8

Tuesday, November 14 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 90-93 (pp. 10-40).

****Assignment: argument outline**

Thursday, November 16 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 94-96; II-I, Q. 100 A.1; II-II Q. 57 and Q. 58, A. 1 and 2 (pp. 40-69; 76-77; 97-108).

Week 9

Thanksgiving Break, No Class

Week 10

Tuesday, November 28 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter and chapters 1-14.

Thursday, November 30 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters 15-26.

****Essay 2 Due Tuesday, Dec. 5, 11:59pm**