

PS 101 – Making sense of society. An overview on classic Western political thought

Instructor: Roberto Fineschi

Office Hours: By appointment

e-mail: r.fineschi@sienaschool.com

Course Description

The class introduces students to the Western political thought by analyzing works by the most important thinkers from this tradition. Starting with Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics and their different approach to the question of State, we will move to the modern theories of absolute monarchy with Hobbes on the one hand, and the foundation of liberal thought with John Locke on the other. After considering Machiavelli as the "founder" of modern political thought, we will deal with Rousseau's contractualism, and finally consider Hegel's theory of modern absolutism, and Marx's criticism of the State as bourgeois class apparatus.

The course will be based on the reading of selected passages from the respective works of the mentioned thinkers followed by group discussions and paper presentations. Students will be introduced to crucial concepts of the Western political tradition in different historical periods, such as slavery, democracy, absolutism, liberalism, class, conflict, etc.

Prerequisites

No particular prerequisite. Familiarity with historical and political studies.

Course Hours

The course meets twice a week.

Student Learning Expectations

A deeper comprehension of that tradition of Western political thought and its fundamental concepts.

Course Outline

Week by Week Description:

Week I.

- 1) Course introduction.
- 2) Plato's Republic. Introduction

Read: Hands-out

Week II.

- 1) Plato's Republic.

Read: Plato's Republic (selected passages).

- 2) Plato's Republic

Read: Plato's Republic (selected passages).

Week III.

- 1) Plato's Republic.

Read: Plato's Republic (selected passages).

- 2) Aristotle's Politics. Introduction

Read: Plato's Republic (selected passages).

Week IV.

- 1) Aristotle's Politics. Forms of government.

Read: Aristotle's Politics (selected passages).

- 2) Aristotle's Politics. Citizenship and slavery.

Read: Aristotle's Politics (selected passages).

Week V.

- 1) Hobbes's Leviathan. State of nature and Political power.

Read: Hobbes's Leviathan (selected passages)

- 2) Hobbes's Leviathan. Monarch and absolutism.

Read: Read: Hobbes's Leviathan (selected passages)

Week VI.

- 1) Review.
- 2) Midterm exam.

Week VII.

- 1) Machiavelli. Intro.
Read: power-point 1 and 2
- 2) Machiavelli. The Prince.
Read: The Prince.

Week VIII.

- 1) Locke. Introduction. State of Nature.
Read: Second Treatise on Government (selected passages)
- 2) Property, Slavery, Civil society.
Read: Second Treatise on Government (selected passages)

Week IX.

- 1) Rousseau's Social Contract. Intro.
Read: Social Contract (selected pages).
- 2) Rousseau. State of Nature and Civil Society.

Week X.

- 1) Hegel's theory of State. Intro.
Read: Hand-out
- 2) Hegel. State, civil society, citizenship.

Read: Philosophy of Right (selected passages).

Week XI.

1) Marx's historical materialism and class struggle.

Read: Manifesto of the communist party (selected passages)

2) Final review

Week XII.

Final Exam

Assignments:

Every week students have to study the materials assigned by the teacher. They will be asked to write papers or personal comments and present those in class.

Textbook and required materials:

- Plato, Republic, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Aristotle, Politics, Translated by E. Barke R, Revised with an Introduction and Notes by R. F. Stalley, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Translated and Edited by P. Bondanella, With an Introduction by M. Viroli, Oxford University Press, 2005
- Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- John Locke, Second Treatise of Government, Edited, with an Introduction, by C. B. Macpherson, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis. Cambridge, 1980.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by C. Betts, Oxford University Press, 1994.
- G. W. F. Hegel, Outlines of the Philosophy of Right, Translated by T. M. Knox, Revised, edited, and introduced by S. Houlgate, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Communist Manifesto, Oxford University Press,

1992.

Grading System

Attendance and Participation	30%
Weekly papers	20%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%

Every week, students will be asked to write a feedback paper or to produce a short essay on the topics considered in class.

Midterm and final exam can include multiple choice questions, open questions, short essays.

Course Policy

Academic Integrity:

Effective learning, teaching and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at the Siena Art Institute and Siena School for Liberal Arts.

Students with documented disabilities:

Any student who has a documented disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate the educational opportunity.

Participation and Attendance:

We consider attending class a crucial part of gaining the most from your study abroad experience. For this reason, we allow only **one unexcused absence** per course during the 15 weeks of the program. This means that you are only allowed to miss **one** lesson of each course for unexcused reasons. Reasons for an absence to be considered unexcused include absences related to personal travel (including delays, strikes, missed connections, etc.) or visits from family and friends.

In addition, being late to class on **4** occasions constitutes an unexcused absence. Please also consider that leaving before the end of the lesson or coming back late from a break is the equivalent of an unexcused absence.

Participation and attendance is worth 30% of the overall grade for every class.

Absences due to health-related issues are considered excused if the student informs the professor and office by email or phone before class begins.

No make-up exams or critiques will be considered unless warranted by extreme circumstances [for example, health, family tragedy] supported with proper documentation.