

## HERTOG 2019 SUMMER COURSES FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

### ARISTOTLE

Robert Bartlett, professor, Boston College

This course focuses on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Through a close reading of these texts, we will investigate the relations between virtue and happiness and virtue and politics. We devote most of the week to *Nicomachean Ethics* and its study of the human good before following this study into *Politics*, particularly its discussion of the kind and quality of regimes.

#### Books:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (University of Chicago Press: 2012)
- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (University of Chicago Press, 2013)

#### Resources

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Relevant pages include Plato, Aristotle, and Machiavelli (on The Great Thinkers), and Leo Strauss and Seth Benardete (on Contemporary Thinkers).

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### Monday, June 24, 2019

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9:00 a.m. to Noon

*Nicomachean Ethics*

#### Readings:

- *Ethics*, Book I, Chs.1–5 and 7–9, 13

#### Questions:

1. The U.S. Declaration of Independence specifies the right to the pursuit, as distinguished from the attainment, of happiness. Aristotle in the opening chapters of the *Ethics* seems to go much further by suggesting that politics or “the political art” is intimately bound up with and may even secure “happiness,” understood as the superlative good that is the target of all our lesser strivings. What precisely is Aristotle’s argument concerning the relation of politics and happiness, and do you find it persuasive? Has it been superseded

by modern liberal democracy, which seems to leave to each of us the right to pursue happiness as we think best?

2. Although we often use “happy” or “happiness” in very casual ways—“I’m not that happy with my sandwich”—Aristotle is at pains in Book I of the *Ethics* to flesh out our deepest hopes for happiness, together with the obstacles those hopes encounter. What is “happiness” according to Aristotle?
3. The distinction between means and ends seems to play an important role in Aristotle’s account of happiness. What exactly does Aristotle mean by an “end”?

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**Tuesday, June 25, 2019**

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**9:00 a.m. to Noon**

***Nicomachean Ethics***

**Readings:**

- *Ethics*, Book II, Chs. 1, 5–7; Book III, Chs. 6–9; Book IV, Ch. 3

**Questions:**

1. Aristotle’s *Ethics* is probably best known for its doctrine of virtue as a “mean.” State clearly the principal features of that doctrine. Do you find it a helpful guide to correct action?
2. Only in the case of courage does Aristotle speak at length of the characteristics of soul that resemble it but in various ways fall short. Give a clear account of the crucial features of the real thing, while also supplying a guess at least as to why Aristotle spends so much time on the ersatz versions of it.
3. Do significant statesmen—say Washington or Churchill—exemplify the core of Aristotle’s discussion of greatness of soul? Or are there important differences?

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## Wednesday, June 26, 2019

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9:00 a.m. to Noon

*Nicomachean Ethics*

**Readings:**

- *Ethics*, Book V, Chs. 1–5, 10; Book X, Chs. 6–9

**Questions:**

1. How are reciprocity and equality related in Chapter 5 of Book V?
2. Why, according to Chapter 9 of Book X, are laws necessary?

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## Thursday, June 27, 2019

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9:00 a.m. to Noon

*Politics*

**Readings:**

- *Politics*, Book I, Chs. 1–7; Book III, Chs. 6–13

**Questions:**

1. What is Aristotle's final understanding of "natural" slavery? What relevance does his discussion of slavery have for the rest of his political thought?
2. What is the point of Aristotle's discussion of flutes in Book III, Chapter 12?
3. What is the strongest part of the "oligarchic" claim to rule?

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## Friday, June 28, 2019

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9:00 a.m. to Noon

*Politics*

**Readings:**

- *Politics*, Book IV; Book VII, Chs. 1–3

**Questions:**

1. If human beings are naturally political, why are there so many different kinds of political organization? Why don't humans fall naturally into one sort of society, as bees and other social animals seem to?

## HERTOG 2019 SUMMER COURSES FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

### MACHIAVELLI

Vickie Sullivan, professor, Tufts University

Machiavelli is one of the most profound and challenging political thinkers. He cannot be understood merely by extracting generalizations; rather, one must pay close attention to the details of his argument in order to understand his account of virtue and the low, but solid ground on which he recommends we construct our political regimes. The chronology in *The Prince* (pp. xxix–xxxi) and the indexes and glossaries in both works can assist in elucidating the particular characters, incidents, and key terms one finds in his writings. In particular, we explore the following themes and terms: founding, corruption, renewal, fortune vs. virtue, ordinary vs. extraordinary, appearance vs. truth, nature, necessity, acquisition, glory, and prudence. We read the entirety of *The Prince* along with excerpts from the *Discourses on Livy*.

#### Books:

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey Mansfield (University of Chicago Press, 1998)
- Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov (University of Chicago Press, 1996)

#### Resources

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Relevant pages include Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke (on The Great Thinkers), and Harvey Mansfield and Leo Strauss (on Contemporary Thinkers).

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## Monday, July 1, 2019

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### 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Introduction to *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter; Letter to Vettori, pp. 107–11
- *Discourses*, Dedicatory Letter; Book I: Preface

#### Questions:

1. What light do the dedicatory letter of *The Prince* and the dedicatory letter and the preface to Book I of the *Discourses* cast on the addressees and purposes of the two works?
2. Why does Machiavelli, according to the dedicatory letter of *The Prince* and the preface to Book I of the *Discourses*, acquire his political knowledge from both modern experience and ancient reading?
3. What light does the analogy to those who sketch landscapes in the dedicatory letter of *The Prince* cast on the distinction between the natures of princes and peoples and on Machiavelli's own status?
4. What are the goals that Machiavelli seemingly sets for himself in the preface to the Book I of the *Discourses*?

### 10:30 a.m. to Noon Hereditary and Mixed Principalities

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Chs. 1–5
- *Discourses*, Book I, Chs. 16, 19, 20; Book II, Ch. 2 (§§1, 3)

#### Questions:

1. What is the underlying basis of the typology of states in *The Prince*, Chapter 1?
2. What light do *Discourses*, Book I, Chapters 19–20, cast on the issue of hereditary rule discussed in *The Prince*, Chapter 2, and the treatment of republics in Chapter 5?
3. What are the implications and the moral and political consequences of Machiavelli's assertion in *The Prince*, Chapter 3, that the desire to acquire is “a very natural and ordinary thing”?
4. Does Machiavelli stick to his announcement in *The Prince*, Chapter 2 that he will leave out reasoning on republics? Note the example he offers for wise princes to imitate in *The Prince*, Chapters 3–5.
5. What are the implications of the treatment of republics in *The Prince*, Chapter 5? Compare *Discourses*, Book I, Chapters 16 and 20, and Book II, Chapter 2.
6. Machiavelli uses the term “princes” in *Discourses* Book I, Chapter 20, for example, to include the leaders of a republic. What implications might this have for how to read *The Prince*?

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## Tuesday, July 2, 2019

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### 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.      **New Princes**

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Chs. 6–7
- *Discourses*, Book I, Chs. 9, 10 (§§ 1–3, 6), 18, 25–26, 37 (§ 2); Book III, Ch.30 (§ 1)

#### Questions:

1. Why are founders the most important examples for Machiavelli? What can we learn from their examples that we might not learn otherwise?
2. How should we understand the treatment of Moses in *The Prince*, Chapter 6, and *Discourses*, Book III, Chapter 30 (§ 1)?
3. What is the point of the story of Remirro de Orco in *The Prince*, Chapter 7?
4. Is Cesare Borgia Machiavelli's model prince?
5. Do the distinctions between acquiring by one's own arms and virtue, and acquiring by the arms of others and fortune, hold up?
6. What sets Caesar and Romulus apart in Machiavelli's view?
7. What might Machiavelli mean when he says that Rome was never free after Caesar?

### 10:30 a.m. to Noon      **Criminal and Civil Principalities**

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Chs. 8–10
- *Discourses*, Book I, Chs. 27, 33, 46, 55 (§§ 4–5)

#### Questions:

1. Is crime compatible with virtue and glory?
2. Should a would-be prince in a republic seek to come to power with the support of the people or that of the great?
3. What is the ultimate distinction between the people and the great? Is it a difference of natures?
4. Why is the origin of tyranny so difficult to perceive?
5. How does Machiavelli propose overcoming corruption?

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## Wednesday, July 3, 2019

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### 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.      **Ecclesiastical Principalities and the Political Uses of Religion**

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Ch. 11
- *Discourses*, Book I, Chs. 11–12, 14; Book II, Ch. 2 (§§ 2, 4); Book III, Ch. 1 (§§ 1–4)

#### Questions:

1. How and why is Cesare Borgia's story told differently in *The Prince*, Chapters 6 and 11?
2. Is religion politically useful and even necessary, according to Machiavelli?

3. What for him are the politically relevant differences between the religious practices of ancient Rome and Christianity?

**10:30 a.m. to Noon**

**Arms and Politics; Morality and Politics**

**Readings:**

- *The Prince*, Chs. 12–15
- *Discourses*, Book I, Ch. 43; Book II, Ch. 13

**Questions:**

1. How does the point of Machiavelli's story of David and Goliath differ from its point in the Bible?
2. Are war and arms all that matter and can laws be disregarded?
3. What is the role of writers according to *The Prince*, Chapter 14? How does this square with his discussion of previous writers in *The Prince*, Chapter 15?
4. What is Machiavelli's teaching about morality?
5. Why might fraud be more effective than force?
6. What is Machiavelli's teaching on "imaginary republics"? Who might he be implicitly attacking, and what are the revolutionary implications of this teaching?

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**Thursday, July 4, 2019**

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**9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.**

**Morality and Politics (continued)**

**Readings:**

- *The Prince*, Chs. 16–18
- *Discourses*, Book III, Chs. 40–42

**Questions:**

1. Does Machiavelli's teaching about morality serve only the prince or his subjects as well?
2. Does it matter what qualities a prince really has, or is appearance all that matters?
3. What are the similarities and differences, if any, between the teaching Machiavelli ascribes to the ancient writers in *The Prince*, Chapter 18, and his own teaching in that chapter?
4. How does the moral character of Machiavelli's advice to republics in *Discourses* Book III, Chapters 40–42 differ from that of his advice to princes in *The Prince*?

**10:30 a.m. to Noon**

**Conspiracies, Soldiers, and Armed Subjects;  
A Prince's Conduct, Ministers, and Advisers**

**Readings:**

- *The Prince*, Chs. 19–23
- *Discourses*, Book II, Ch. 24 (§§ 1–2); Book III, Ch. 35 (§§ 1–2).

**Questions:**

1. What is the point of the discussion of conspiracies in *The Prince*, Chapter 19?
2. What is the point of the discussion of the Roman emperors in *The Prince*, Chapter 19?

3. Do princes have to avoid being hated by the people?
4. What are the implications of the advice in *The Prince*, Chapter 20 to arm one's subjects and not to build fortresses for princely rule?
5. Does the end of Chapter 21 make Machiavelli a forerunner of modern liberalism?
6. How is it possible for a minister "never to think of himself but always of the prince," given Machiavelli's view of human nature?
7. Compare the threefold typology of brains in *The Prince*, Chapter 22 to the distinctions between princes and peoples in the dedicatory letter and between the great and the people in Chapter 9.
8. What does Machiavelli's discussion of advisers imply for his own role as a teacher or adviser of princes?

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## Friday, July 5, 2019

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### 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Italy and Fortune

#### Readings:

- *The Prince*, Chs. 24–26
- *Discourses*, Book II, Ch. 29; Book III, Ch. 31

#### Questions:

1. What is Machiavelli's teaching about virtue and fortune?
2. How should we understand the treatment of Moses in *The Prince*, Chapter 26?
3. Is the plea to liberate Italy in Chapter 26 the culmination or a contradiction of the overall argument of *The Prince*?

### 10:30 a.m. to Noon Machiavelli's Constitution and Ours

#### Readings:

- *Discourses*, Book I, Chs. 2–6, 30, 34–35, 58; Book II, Ch. 5.

#### Questions:

1. How might one go about creating a new epoch?
2. What kind of political order or constitution does Machiavelli favor? On what grounds does he favor it?
3. How does it compare to that of the United States?