

HERTOG 2018 SUMMER COURSES

GRAND STRATEGY

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Classic strategic thinking, in the Western tradition, is not about rigid doctrines – realism, liberal internationalism, etc. – and the debates between them. Instead, it encourages statesmen to clarify larger principles and aims for their state about war, peace, and justice; and to develop the judgment to pursue those principles in the dynamic and confusing circumstances of a particular time and place.

This seminar will investigate the causes of war and peace, and some of the strategies that states and leaders have pursued to contend with armed conflict and promote international order, stability, and justice. It will consist of two sessions per day over a one-week period. Each morning, students will discuss readings by two great theorists of strategy – Thucydides and Machiavelli – and then classic American statements, all with a view toward asking how a liberal democracy should conceive of grand strategy and the kind of strategic thinking that statesmen in liberal democracies must undertake to serve both interests and ideals. Each afternoon, they will participate in a seminar led by an expert or policymaker to help probe the relevance of the seminar's broad themes to the challenges that America faces today.

Books:

- *The Landmark Thucydides*, ed. Strassler (Simon & Schuster, 1998) – with its very helpful maps, pictures, and editor's annotations, appendices, etc.; all selections are identified first by book and section (standard for all translations of Thucydides) and then by page numbers of the Landmark edition
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey Mansfield, 2nd edition (University of Chicago Press, 1998), with its precise translation and also excellent notes, glossary, etc.

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 Thucydides and Machiavelli (on The Great Thinkers).

Monday, July 30, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon **Thucydides and Classic Strategic Thinking on War, Peace, International Order**

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 1, sections 1–2 (pp. 3–4 in *Landmark*), sections 18–23 (pp. 13–16), secs. 31–37 (pp. 21–25), secs. 42–44 (pp. 27–28), secs. 66–71 (pp. 37–41), secs. 75–78 (pp. 43–45), sec. 115 (p. 63), sec. 118 (p. 65), secs. 125, 126 [beginning], 127 (pp. 69–70), sections 79–88 (pp. 45–49)
- Book II, sec. 1 (p. 89), secs. 11–14 (pp. 97–99), secs. 21–22 (103–104), secs. 34–47 (pp. 111–118), sec. 65 (pp. 127–28)

Discussion Questions:

Thucydides introduces strategic thinking as striving for broader or comprehensive awareness of one's own culture & state – of the physical and cultural and intellectual context of his state, and the political and intellectual presuppositions shaping strategic debate or options; but also awareness of these factors for one's allies, adversaries, or enemies.

1. What exactly was this long, terrible, “great” war between the Athenians and the Spartans?
2. Why did it start?
3. What does Thucydides mean by stating that, in his judgment, the war was “inevitable”?

Tuesday, July 31, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Thucydides on Strategic Situations, Leaders, and What War Does to Us

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 1, secs. 31–36 (pp. 21–25), sec. 44 (p. 28)
Book 5, secs. 84–116 (pp. 350–57)
Book 8, sec. 24 (pp. 494–95)
- Book 3, secs. 35–50 (pp. 175–84)
- Book 4, secs. 17–22 (pp. 232–34), secs. 78–88 (pp. 266–72), sec. 108 (p. 282), sec. 117 (pp. 285–86); Book 5, sec. 14 (p. 309); Book 6, sec. 1 (p. 361), secs. 6–20 (pp. 365–73), sec. 24 (p. 375), secs. 30–31 (pp. 377–78), secs. 75–81 (403–07); Book 7, sec. 47 (p. 455), sec. 55 (p. 459), sec. 75–77 (pp. 471–73), sec. 87 (p. 478); Book 8, secs. 96–97 (pp. 538–40)
- Book 2, secs. 52–53 (pp. 120–21), Book 3, secs. 81–84 (pp. 198–201)

Discussion Questions:

We discuss here one of the most famous episodes from Thucydides, the “Melian dialogue” between the empire (Athens) and the small state of Melos.

1. What ideas from Thucydides’s account of these states, their aims, their contexts, and their leaders can educate our thinking about the 21st century situation of war, peace, and international order? Especially for the U.S.–Israeli alliance and for the contentious and unsettled Middle East?

2. What does Thucydides reveal about the role or situation of middle to smaller powers among great powers?

We meet the champion of the Athenian demagogues, Cleon (Donald Trump without the charm) and his surprisingly effective opponent, Diodotus – debating whether to use genocide as a tool of empire; the stunning appearance of the un-Spartan Spartan leader, Brasidas (the Petraeus figure), who turns around the war for Sparta; and the debate between two Athenians, Alcibiades and Nicias, on whether to undertake the Sicilian expedition (America’s Vietnam scenario); and, finally, the Syracusans’s innovative, daring response to the attempted Athenian invasion.

3. What does Thucydides teach about leaders trying to turn around a bad situation to gain advantage, security?
4. What kind of imaginative, unexpected thinking do they need to undertake?

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Machiavelli and Modern Realism: The Strategy of Ambition, Power, and Cunning

Readings:

- *The Prince*, Epistle Dedicatory (pp. 3–4), chapters 1–2 (pp. 5–7), chapter 5–8 (pp. 20–38)
- *The Prince*, chapters 13–15 (pp. 54–62), chapter 17 (pp. 65–68)

Discussion Questions:

Machiavelli tells us to “get real” about politics: war, which includes the constant maneuvering to either prepare for or avoid open combat, is the normal, everyday condition of politics – both in domestic and international affairs. Therefore power, and the mixture of force and fraud that will be most effective in securing and maintaining power, is the central question for rulers and strategists.

Thursday, August 2, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Machiavelli and Liberal Democracies

Readings:

- *The Prince*, chapters 24–26 (pp. 96–105)
- *The Prince*, chapters 18, chapter 19 (first paragraph) (pp. 68–74), ch. 20 (first and last paragraphs) (pp. 83, pp. 86–7), ch. 21 (first paragraph, last two paragraphs) (pp. 87–88, 90–91), chapters 22–23 (pp. 93–95)
- George Washington, excerpts from Farewell Address (1796) (initial discussion)

Discussion Questions:

Machiavelli teaches a new conception of religion in relation to politics; a new acceptance of the limits of moral principles and the reality of “dirty hands” among strategists and rulers; and new advice on how a strategist and ruler must manage domestic politics, his advisers and deputies, as well as adversaries and allies.

1. What can we legitimately use from his strategic approach, what must we repudiate?
2. Is Machiavelli not such a bad guy – does he just want to “Make Italy Great Again”? Is he simply telling us that the strategist must be a patriotic, blending military and political leadership in order to provide for one’s country, one’s people, in an independent state?
3. Or, is his ambition to change our conceptions of politics and strategy, his new orientation to human greatness at the expense of any fixed moral and religious beliefs, in the end the path to human and political self–destruction for those who attempt to “defeat fortune,” control human destiny, and establish their reputation for greatness?
4. To what degree can a liberal–democratic strategist use the classic realism of Machiavelli?

Friday, August 3, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon **Modern Strategic Culture and Thinking, and the Characteristic Strategy of a Great and Liberal Democracy**

Readings:

- Selections from the introductory essay by Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley to *The Making of Strategy*, ed. Murray (Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Washington, excerpts from Farewell Address (1796) (final discussion)
- Excerpts from “NSC 68” (1950)
- Excerpts from President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address (1961)

Discussion Questions:

In this session, we argue against a focus on doctrines or schools of strategy, instead pointing strategists toward the enduring factors that always must be discerned and considered – about their own state and other states: geography; history; culture, philosophy, & religion; economic factors; government type & institutions (including military culture). Thus strategists must develop judgment, ensure debate through institutional structures, and make prudent decisions in the context of both historical understanding and the current moment, situation.

We will examine efforts by great liberal-democrat leaders to harmonize (balance & blend) distinct “schools” or concerns of foreign policy or strategy, e.g., realism, liberalism, nationalism, so as to secure both the interests (security, power, prosperity) and ideals (liberty, moral principles) of a liberal democracy in matters of war, peace, and international affairs.