

## POT 4013: Great Political Thinkers I

Summer 2012  
Section: 02E4  
Meeting times: M-F, period 4  
Classroom: 101 Anderson

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Office hours: T, W 2:00-3:00

"[For Socrates,] knowledge is not a series of propositions or an abstract theory, but the certainty of choice, decision, and initiative. Knowledge is not just plain knowing, but knowing-what-ought-to-be-preferred, and hence knowing how to live."

- Pierre Hadot

### Course description:

For Pierre Hadot, the philosophies of antiquity, despite their many differences, all “agreed with Socrates that human beings are plunged in misery, anguish, and evil because they exist in ignorance. Evil is to be found not within things, but in the value judgments which people bring to bear upon things. People can therefore be cured of their ills only if they are persuaded to change their value judgments, and in this sense all these philosophies wanted to be therapeutic.” This means, among other things, that philosophy was about identifying not just what to think, but how to live. In this vein, our objective for this course will be to read the major schools of ancient philosophy as competing therapeutic attempts to identify and alleviate the ills and evils of human life. Since it was believed that the human condition must be in harmony before the city or state could exist in peace and happiness, we thus have the additional task of understanding how these therapeutic attempts at philosophy relate to the proper arrangement of citizens in political life.

The course will focus on four schools of Ancient Greek philosophical thought (as represented in the works of Greek, Roman, and medieval thinkers), reading each one to understand how its followers understood the problems associated with (individual and collective) life and how they used philosophy to overcome those problems. Thus, for each school, our investigations will necessitate (but not be limited to) asking: Who were its major contributors? What are the causes of misery that plague the human condition? What remedies does this school offer? If value judgments are the source of human misery, how are we to change these judgments? How can we achieve freedom from the domination of these judgments? What role do ethics and politics play? Speaking more generally, what would this philosophy have us do?

### Required texts:

- Four Texts on Socrates*, (eds. Thomas West & Grace West). Cornell University Press. ISBN: 0801485746
- Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, (ed. Francis Cornford). Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0195003640
- Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, (ed. Stephen Everson). Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521484006
- Epictetus, *The Art of Living*, (ed. Sharon Lebell). HarperCollins. ISBN: 0061286052
- Marcus Aurelius, *The Emperor's Handbook*, (ed. David Hicks & C. Scot Hicks). Scribner. ISBN: 0743233832
- Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, (eds. Brad Inwood & Lloyd Gerson). Hackett Publishers. ISBN: 0872203786

Note: Please try to obtain these versions. I have done my best to assign versions that are easy to find, economically-priced, and yet responsibly edited. Having uniform translations/edits is more practical for following the readings (including assigned passages from the editors' introductions), and having classroom discussions. These should all be available at the UF Bookstore, and websites like amazon.com or half.com should have plenty of inexpensive copies.

## **Grading:**

Three components will comprise your final grade: a 5-page midterm (40%), a final in-class exam (45%), and attendance and participation (15%). Midterm and exam dates can be found in the schedule below.

*Papers:* The highest grade a late paper can receive in the absence of a legitimate excuse is a "C+." Please be aware: a "C+" is not the lowest grade a late paper can receive; it is the highest (i.e., it is the ceiling, not the floor).

*Final exam:* The final exam will take place over two days. You will be answering one question in class per day. This means you will need to bring at least one "blue book" each day.

*Participation:* Since a crucial component of understanding philosophy is engaging in agonal debate over texts, you will be held accountable for attending and partaking in classroom discussions. In fact, a large portion of our in-class activities will be comprised of discussion. Consequently, you cannot earn an "A" without coming to class.

## **Academic Integrity:**

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines. Among other things, this means that cheating on essays and exams is totally unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of portraying as your own the words or ideas of other people. If you are unsure what comprises plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, you should consult with me (sooner rather than later), and/or visit

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/procedures/honorviolations.php>

## **Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please come see me as soon as possible regarding this matter.

## **Readings:**

There's no getting around it: this course is a motorcycle ride through the Louvre. We will cover some of the most important arguments made during Western political philosophy's ancient period in less than six weeks. This course should be considered a challenge, but one that you are fully capable of meeting if you give a committed effort. It is assumed that you are here because you want to understand these arguments. That said, I do not apologize for reading loads. They reflect the best balance I can find between the demands of time and the demands of content. In other words, we are going to read the essential stuff and get to the point, but that still means we have to work to get there. My goal is to get you reading and get you thinking. My expectations are simple: come to class prepared and willing to participate in meaningful discussion. This means having done the readings *in advance* of the class for which they have been assigned. It is essential that you keep up with the readings, which average about 30 pages per day. Falling behind will make it difficult for you to participate in class discussions, follow the lectures, write papers, and develop intellectually.

## Schedule of readings:

### Introduction/Logistics

**May 14 (M)** Introduction to course, syllabus perusal (no readings)

**May 15 (Tu)** Getting familiar with the class and with the Ancients (no readings)

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### Socrates establishes the problem

**May 16 (W)** *The Apology* in *Four Texts on Socrates*, pp 63-81 (17a-30c)

**May 17 (Th)** *The Apology* in *Four Texts on Socrates*, pp 81-97 (30c-42a)

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### The Platonic Response

**May 18 (F)** *The Republic*, pp 1-14 (ch I-II)

**May 21 (M)** *The Republic*, pp 14-40 (ch III-IV)

**May 22 (Tu)** *The Republic*, pp 41-66, 102-118 (ch V-VIII, X-XI)

**May 23 (W)** *The Republic*, pp 119-144 (ch XII-XIV)

**May 24 (Th)** *The Republic*, pp 175-211 (ch XVIII-XXII)

**May 25 (F)** *The Republic*, pp 211-235 (ch XVIII-XXV)

**May 28 (MEMORIAL DAY – NO CLASSES)**

**May 29 (Tu)** *The Republic*, pp 264-266, 273-274, 279-280, 287-288, 301-320 (ch XXIX-XXXIV)

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### The Aristotelian Response

**May 30 (W)** *The Politics*, pp 1- 14 (*Ethics* excerpt, bk I)

**May 31 (Th)** *The Politics*, pp 30-46 (bk II)

**June 01 (F)** *The Politics*, pp 61-91 (bk III)

**June 04 (M)** *The Politics*, pp 91-110 (bk IV)

**June 05 (Tu)** *The Politics*, pp 119-139 (bk V)

**June 06 (W)** *The Politics*, pp 166-194 (bk VII)

**June 07 (Th)** Mid-term review

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM HANDED OUT**

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### The Stoic Response

**June 08 (F)** *Art of Living*, pp 3-79

**June 11 (M)** *Art of Living*, pp 82-113

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE**

**June 12 (Tu)** *The Emperor's Handbook*, pp 19-39 (ch I-III)

**June 13 (W)** *The Emperor's Handbook*, pp 53-89 (ch V-VII)

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### The Skeptical Response

**June 14 (Th)** *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp 302-308, 311-314 (On Academic philosophy), 317-325

**June 15 (F)** *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp 347-361  
**June 18 (M)** *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp 362-378  
**June 19 (Tu)** *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp 387-397

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**In-class final exam**

**June 20 (W)** Exam review  
**June 21 (Th)** Question 1 of 2  
**June 22 (F)** Question 2 of 2