

POLS 4310.001  
Fall 2021  
Tu./Th., 1:30-2:45 PM  
Old Main 301

## POLS 4310: HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT I

“And many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation.”

—Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*

**Instructor:** Dr. John Antonio Pascarella

- Office: Old Main 324E
- Office Hours: Tu./Th. 9:00-10:00 AM, 12:00-1:00 PM, and by appointment.
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### Required Texts:

- Thucydides. *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Paul Woodruff. Hackett, ISBN: 0872201682.
- Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Basic Books, ISBN: 0465094080.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Robert Bartlett & Susan Collins. University of Chicago Press, ISBN: 0226026756.

**Course Website:** The course website can be accessed through the Canvas sign-in at <https://usu.instructure.com>. All assignments, grades, and Zoom sessions will be available through Canvas.

**Course Description:** What is the best human life? Can politics help one live the best life? These questions form the core of political philosophy and are the focus of an extended conversation between the world’s greatest philosophers for over two millennia. In engaging these questions, political philosophers put forth competing views of human nature. Do human beings desire simply to survive and live comfortably, or do they have higher longings? If human beings seek comfortable self-preservation, then it seems politics could provide the necessary material conditions for the best life. But if human beings desire something more than comfortable lives, what do they seek? Honor? Love? Friendship? Happiness? If these are some of human beings’ higher longings, to what extent can political life satisfy them? Would rulers need to take account of such longings, or are their duties more limited? What responsibility do citizens have for one another and the regimes under which they live? To resolve the difficulties posed by the last few questions, one could say that both the rulers and the ruled must do what is just. Yet in putting forward this suggestion, one raises perhaps the most pressing political question available to us: What is justice?

This course will focus on three texts in the History of Political Thought from Ancient Greece to give students a deeper sense of how the Greeks engage these questions. What is distinct about the Greeks is their understanding of the natural relationship between political life and *logos*, a comprehensive idea that means “speech,” “reason,” and the “rational account” of all things.

The course will begin with selections (mostly in the form of speeches) from Thucydides’ *The Peloponnesian War*. Though scholars traditionally treat *The Peloponnesian War* as a “history,” Thucydides never refers to his own work using this term. Indeed, Thucydides admits to employing

some art of his own with his account's speeches, which invites questions about what he aims to teach his readers through them. Because these speeches are a crucial part of his account of the war between Athens and Sparta that culminates in the collapse of the Athenian empire, Thucydides suggests they are necessary for understanding the relationship between politics and war.

The course will then turn to two of the most famous works in the History of Political Thought, Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the central questions of which are "What is justice?" and "What is happiness?", respectively. But a deeper look into Plato and Aristotle's works reveals a more fundamental question: What is the good? For both philosophers, the way into this question is through *logos*, albeit in different forms (i.e., a dialogue from Plato and a treatise from Aristotle). As indicated with the quotation from Machiavelli at the top of this syllabus, one of the most common criticisms of Plato and Aristotle is they are "idealists," not "realists" (a label often applied to Thucydides). But perhaps this criticism is too simple. If we are honest readers, we must hold open the possibility that the Ancient Greeks' deeply contemplative approach to political life may be more "realistic," practical, and true than their critics admit.

**Course Objectives:** Through this course, students will:

1. Develop a basic understanding of principles and theories.
  - a. Authors in the History of Political Thought hold different teachings on human nature and the ends of politics. By looking at works from Ancient Greece, students will develop a sense of the distinct principles and theories of political life to emerge over two millennia ago.
2. Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
  - a. This course requires students to engage in a close reading of texts in the History of Political Thought to understand each text on its author's terms. The strongest criticism of any idea or argument is one that takes it most seriously. Students are encouraged to evaluate each of these texts in class discussions, papers, and exams, but they must do so after demonstrating they understand each text.
3. Develop ethical reasoning.
  - a. Texts in the History of Political Thought focus on the moral questions at the foundation of politics. The complexity of these texts reflects the depths of those questions, thus encouraging students to contemplate the relationship between ethics and politics at all levels of political life.
4. Learn to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions).
  - a. All political questions point back to the question of what constitutes a good life for a human being. While some of these texts may initially seem "impractical," students who read them seriously will discover the enduring nature of the question of the good life that offers them a comprehensive perspective on politics.

**Course Format and Requirements:** Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. For this course to succeed, there are two basic requirements:

1. Read the assigned texts with great care: The texts in this course were written with great precision. As a result, you will have to work hard to attempt to understand the author's intention. Simply skimming these works will be useless. These thinkers make complicated arguments that take time to unfold. In some cases, an argument will be initiated in one chapter of a work and remain unresolved for several chapters. You must follow these arguments so you can first understand the text, then engage it.
2. Come to class ready to discuss every reading: Student participation is vital to every lecture. This course will pose many difficult questions with complex answers. The lectures will

attempt to wrestle with these questions, but the lectures' success depends upon your engagement. Your questions will not only help you understand the text, but your peers as well. Further, your questions will help me as an instructor assess the class's understanding of the material. It is also likely that you will help me see points in the texts I had not noticed before and alert me to questions I had not considered.

**Grading:** Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	100-94	B-	83-80	D+	69-67
A-	93-90	C+	79-77	D	66-64
B+	89-87	C	76-74	D-	63-60
B	86-84	C-	73-70	F	59-0

Your course grade will be calculated according to the following criteria:

- Opening Questions/Participation 5%
- Reading Quizzes 20%
- Exams 30%
- 2 Papers (3-4 pages each) 35%
- Writing Fellows Consultation 10%

Opening Questions/Participation (5%): This class cannot succeed without your participation. It is impossible to participate, however, if you do not show up for class. Nor can you expect to succeed in this course without attending the lectures that will help you understand these texts. At the beginning of each class, four students assigned to that day's readings will read a passage of their choice from the text and provide an open question about that reading to the class. To avoid repetition, students need to have four questions prepared. Students must e-mail their questions to me before their assigned classes start. I will post the open question schedule at the end of the first week of class.

- For my own records, I will keep attendance for each class with sign-in sheets.

Reading Quizzes (20%): To ensure you read the assigned texts, there will be short quizzes on Canvas that you must complete before every class. The questions will be True/False and/or single-word answers. They will not be trick questions, and should be simple if you complete the readings.

Exams (30%): There will be two exams this semester, a midterm and a final. Both exams will be accessible online through Canvas. The exams will have two sections. The first section will consist of short-answer questions to assess your understanding of authors' key ideas. The second section will consist of essay questions that ask you first to explain authors' arguments, then evaluate them. Like papers, exams are *primary sources only*. The exams will occur on the following dates:

- Midterm: Thursday, October 28 (Available only from 10:30-11:45 AM)
- Final: Tuesday, December 14

Papers (35%): You will be assigned two papers (3-4 pages each) throughout the course of the semester. Rough drafts require only Canvas submissions. For the final draft, you must turn in a hard copy in class *and* submit these papers through Canvas's Turnitin.com function.

Paper extensions will not be granted except under extenuating circumstances. To receive such an extension, you must request permission with a valid excuse in writing *at least two days before* the due date. Grades on late papers will be reduced by half a letter grade each day after the due date, up until the seventh day, at which point the paper will receive a “0.”

You will receive paper topics three weeks prior to the due date. You are also free to write your papers on a topic of your choosing so long as you first discuss it with me. *All papers must work solely with primary sources.* More information concerning papers will be given at the appropriate time.

Writing Fellows Consultation (10%): This semester, our course will partner with the USU Writing Fellows Program. The Writing Fellows work with students to help them better develop their papers. One week after receiving the paper topic, you will need to submit a *complete rough draft* of your paper through Canvas. There are two Writing Fellows for our course, and I will assign each student to one of these two Fellows. The Writing Fellows will then read your papers and schedule an individual Zoom meeting to discuss how to improve them. You will then be responsible for revising your papers according to the Writing Fellow’s recommendations over the two-week period between submitting your rough draft and turning in the final paper. The Writing Fellows Consultation grade will have two Pass/Fail components:

1. Submission of the complete rough draft two weeks prior to the paper’s due date.
2. Confirmation from your Writing Fellow of a Zoom meeting to discuss your rough draft *within 10 days* of submitting the rough draft.

Writing Fellow consultations and papers will be due on the following dates:

- Paper 1
  - ✓ Rough draft due Thursday, September 23 at the start of class
  - ✓ Final draft due Thursday, October 7
- Paper 2
  - ✓ Rough draft due Thursday, November 18 at the start of class
  - ✓ Final draft due Thursday, December 2 at the start of class

**Classroom Etiquette:** The effectiveness of this course depends upon your contributions in the classroom. In addition to coming prepared to discuss the assigned readings, I ask that you please:

- Come to class on time.
- Be courteous in the classroom and ask thoughtful questions that aim at helping us understand the course material. If you disagree with either your peers or me, be civil. The classroom is about dialogue, not winning an argument.
- Silence your cell phone and refrain from using it during class.
- Use laptops only for the sake of taking notes. If a peer’s laptop use becomes distracting, please notify me about it after class so we can address the issue.
- Do not eat during class.

**COVID-19 Classroom Protocols:** While not mandated, USU encourages and welcomes the wearing of masks in all university building, especially within 6 feet of others. Furthermore, it is strongly encouraged to take measures to mitigate risk as recommended by federal and state public health officials. These measures include getting fully vaccinated, staying home if you are sick (even with mild symptoms), and maintaining good hygiene including frequent hand washing. Testing will

be provided, without charge, throughout the semester and the [USU COVID Webpage](#) will provide up-to-date information. Please remember; COVID can have significant impact on the health and safety of those around you so remain vigilant and respectful.

**Switching to Online Classes:** If for any reason USU decides to switch to online classes during the semester, or if I get sick, I will plan to host all classes as live Zoom sessions at the regularly scheduled time.

**Recording Lectures:** Students are not permitted to record lectures. The sole exception to this rule is students who require recording for the sake of disability accommodation.

**Contacting the Instructor:** If you have any questions about the course, please talk with me. I will be available to talk immediately after class. You are also more than welcome to come by my office during office hours. If my office hours do not work well with your schedule, I would be glad to schedule an appointment at a time that works for you. Outside of meeting in person, the best way to get in touch with me is via e-mail. In your e-mails, please (1) Clearly identify yourself and the subject of your message and (2) Compose your message with proper attention to spelling and grammar. The way you compose e-mails reflects upon you, so it is good to get in the habit of writing them in a serious manner. Also, please be sure to send your e-mails at a reasonable hour (preferably before 8:00 PM) if you would like to receive a response on the same day.

\*\*If you are struggling in the course or have questions regarding your papers, please come talk with me as soon as possible. Do not wait until the end of the semester when there is only one assignment left. The sooner we speak, the more likely it is you can take action to perform better in the course.\*\*

**Office Hours:** My office hours will be both in-person and online throughout the semester. The Canvas course calendar will contain fifteen-minute sign-up slots within my office hours (Tu./Th. 9:00-10:00 AM, 12:00-1:00 PM). Please use the Canvas “Find Appointments” function in the calendar to sign up for an appointment. For online appointments, you can access the Zoom link to the appointment through the course navigation page. If you have any trouble setting up an appointment or all the slots are full, please e-mail me directly.

**Policy on Academic Integrity:** USU’s standards of academic integrity apply to everything you do in this course, and all other academic work you undertake at USU. I draw your attention to the statement on academic integrity found in Article VI of the USU Student Code:

“Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others’ participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors” (VI-1).

In line with USU’s Honor Pledge, students should not engage in cheating, falsification, or plagiarism. For what constitutes these offenses against Academic integrity, students should consult Article VI-1 of the Student code (<https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/article6>). Students should further familiarize themselves with what constitutes plagiarism by using the following link: <https://library.usu.edu/instruct/online/plagiarism.php>.

There are a number of forms of plagiarism, and some of them might surprise you. Please be sure you understand this matter fully before writing, as no excuse will be accepted after the fact, not even ignorance of the rules. You may of course discuss your paper topic amongst yourselves if you wish, but *all writing must be your own*. Plagiarism—particularly electronic plagiarism—is a serious problem requiring a serious remedy. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the instructor or a well-recognized source book on academic writing. *A good rule of thumb* is this: if you are quoting 3 or more words in a row, use quotation marks and cite your source. Even if you are not quoting, but just “borrowing” an idea, fact, argument, etc., by paraphrasing it, a citation is necessary (though not quotation marks if yours is a paraphrase.)

Students found guilty of an academic honesty violation will receive a “0” for the assignment and the penalty of an “F” for the entire course.

**Class Cancellations and Weather:** Outside of the University closing due to inclement weather, if I cannot make it to campus, I will send a message to your USU e-mail address as soon as possible.

**Note on Syllabus Changes:** This syllabus is not a contract, and I reserve the authority to change requirements by providing you with a 48-hour notice of changes in class and on Canvas. You are responsible for any changes that may occur during the semester.

**Accessibility Statement:** USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, 435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

**Course Withdrawal Dates:**

- September 20: Last day for adding courses and withdrawing without “W” on transcript
- November 1: Last day for withdrawal to receive “W” on transcript but no final grade

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings and Assignments</u>
Tuesday, August 31	Course Introduction
Thursday, September 2	Thucydides’ <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , Speeches at Sparta of the Athenian Envoys (pgs. 21-25) and Sthenelaidas the Ephor (pgs. 28-29)
Tuesday, September 7	Thucydides’ <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , Pericles’ Funeral Oration and the Plague (pgs. 39-50)
Thursday, September 9	Thucydides’ <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , Cleon and Diodotus (pgs. 66-76)
Tuesday September 14	Thucydides’ <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , Civil War in Corcyra (pgs. 89-95)
Thursday, September 16	Thucydides’ <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , The Melian Dialogue (pgs. 102-109)

Date

Readings and Assignments

Tuesday, September 21	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book I (327a-336a, pgs. 3-13)
Thursday, September 23	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book I (336b-354c, pgs. 13-34) ✓ <b>Paper 1 Rough Draft Due</b>
Tuesday, September 28	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book II (pgs. 35-61)
Thursday, October 30	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book III (pgs. 63-96)
Tuesday, October 5	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book IV (pgs. 97-125)
Thursday, October 7	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book V (pgs. 127-161) ✓ <b>Paper 1 Due</b>
Tuesday, October 12	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VI (pgs. 163-192)
Thursday, October 14	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VII (pgs. 193-220)
Tuesday, October 19	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VIII (pgs. 221-249)
Thursday, October 21	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book IX (pgs. 251-275)
Tuesday, October 26	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book X (pgs. 277-303)
Thursday, October 28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Tuesday, November 2	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I (1094a1-1097a14, pgs. 1-10)
Thursday, November 4	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I (1097a15-1103a10, pgs. 10-25)
Tuesday, November 9	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II (pgs. 26-41)
Thursday, November 11	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book III (pgs. 42-66)
Tuesday, November 16	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IV (pgs. 67-89)
Thursday, November 18	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book V (pgs. 90-114) ✓ <b>Paper 2 Rough Draft Due</b>
Tuesday, November 23	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VI (pgs. 115-134)
Thursday, November 25	<b>No Class – Thanksgiving!</b>
Tuesday, November 30	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VII (pgs. 135-162)
Thursday, December 2	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VIII (pgs. 163-187) ✓ <b>Paper 2 Due</b>
Tuesday, December 7	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book IX (pgs. 188-209)
Thursday, December 9	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book X (pgs. 210-235)
Tuesday, December 14	<b>Final Exam</b> (1:30 PM-3:20 PM)