**Classics in Social and Political Thought**

**Fall 2012, Section 3**

**Tuesday and Thursday, 9-10:20**

**Social Sciences Research Building, Room 106**

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*There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys, how's the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?”*

Welcome to Classics in Social and Political Thought—a course that will, I hope, provide the intellectual structure for the rest of your experience at Chicago, whatever you choose to study. In this course, we will encounter some of the greatest works of philosophy and theology ever written. Some of it will seem opaque—worse, some of it will seem irrelevant. Our duty as a seminar will be to clarify these works, and to make them speak to contemporary readers. And speak they can: although we might not agree with the answers, they grapple with some of the most significant questions that we face as human beings.

**Details and Course Requirements**

*Attendance:* Given the nature of the course, attendance is mandatory, and all absences will be noted. If you have a reason to be absent, let me know as far in advance as possible. One absence will not torpedo your grade, but two or more absences without excuses will definitely hurt you.

*Discussion:* This is a seminar, organized around discussion. The most important course requirement is that you do the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it. Classics is a group effort, and the experiment will only succeed if everyone participates. This will mean different things to different people, and I hope that you will use the opportunity to grow as a thinker and a talker. Socrates, the presiding spirit of the course, did not write a word: he philosophized through talking. Our mission in this course is to follow Socrates’ example, learning to converse as a seminar. A seminar is different from a lecture or a paper: we will learn to bounce our ideas off one another and build confidence to speak before our ideas are fully-formed. I understand that some people are more comfortable speaking in class than others. It is important to realize, though, that speaking philosophically is not a skill that one either has or doesn’t have: it is one that requires work and practice. You are not permitted, that is, to rest on your laurels during class because you imagine yourself to be someone who does not speak.

*Online component:* In addition to classroom discussion, you will be expected to periodically contribute posts on Chalk. After class each day, I will post a series of questions about the next session’s readings. Five times over the quarter, you will be responsible for responding to one of these questions in a well-developed post, including at least one citation from the text (at least 250 words). You may also choose to respond to another student’s response instead of responding directly to my own questions; you can also, if you wish, write something of your own, without responding to my prompt (this is your chance to guide class discussion). Feel free to be creative here: you can include links to Youtube videos, articles in the news, or anything else that seems appropriate. These will be due at ten P.M. the night before each class.

*Papers and Exams:* This is a writing-intensive course. I will be assigning three papers. The first, due very early in the quarter, will be no more than 750 words. The second two will be 1,500-2,000 words. These will each be written in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, with one inch margins. Each essay will be titled and properly referenced. We will go over paper expectations, including citation style, later in the quarter. I will pass out a suggested list of topics, but for the second and third papers, you will be free to use your own *so long as you receive approval from me at least one week before the paper is due*. The second paper will be peer-reviewed before you turn it in to me (don’t worry, we’ll go over this in class). All students must write the first two papers: after this, you can make a choice. You can either write the third paper and skip the final exam or take the final exam and skip the third paper. It is not acceptable to turn in to me a paper, even a revised one, that you have written for another class without my permission.

*Extensions and Late Papers*: I am not especially lenient with extensions: you know about these papers far in advance and if you fail to make time in your schedule to write them, it is your own fault. That said, if there are any extenuating circumstances—personal or family illness, for instance—please let me know and I will be as accommodating as I can. If papers are handed in late, I will deduct one grade per day (i.e. from an A- to a B+).

*Office Hours:* Please come and see me, if just to chat for a few minutes! The course will work best if we get to know each other: you don’t need to wait until papers are due to stop by. That said, if you are having any issues with the course or would like help on your papers, stop by then, too.

*Computers:* You are highly discouraged from using laptop computers; if you wish to use them, turn off the wireless function. You are not permitted to browse the internet during class. If your computer use is distracting to yourself or others, I will consider you absent on the day in question (and your grade will suffer accordingly).

*Plagiarism*: I take plagiarism extremely seriously, and will not be lenient with those found guilty. It is far better to turn in a mediocre paper than to plagiarize: the former will hurt your grade but, if caught, the latter will jeopardize your academic career. At the very least, you will fail the paper; more likely, you will fail the course as a whole and have your case turned over to university administration. There is little need to use secondary sources in this course, but if you choose to use them, they must be properly cited.

What is plagiarism? If you have any questions about this—that is, if you are not sure whether or not a certain act constitutes plagiarism—ask me before turning in your paper. Basically, do not pass off other’s ideas or words as your own: if you got a cool idea from Plato from a website, or the footnotes that come with our version, or from a conversation with your father, you have to cite it. There is no shame in this: we all get our ideas from somewhere (my dissertation had over one thousand footnotes). Here is an excerpt of the definition provided by the American Historical Association: “Plagiarism includes more subtle and perhaps more pernicious abuses than simply expropriating the exact wording of another author without attribution. Plagiarism also includes the limited borrowing, without attribution, of another person's distinctive and significant research findings, hypotheses, theories, rhetorical strategies, or interpretations, or an extended borrowing even with attribution.”

**Assessment**

40%: Class Participation, Attendance, Chalk

10%: Paper 1

25%: Paper 2

25%: Paper 3 (or exam)

**Required Texts** (available at the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore):

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1991)

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1998)

Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan, ed. William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan (2nd ed.) (Hackett, 2002)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (2nd ed.) (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

You are required to use these editions of these texts, in order to facilitate common discussion.

Tues, 2 Oct: Introduction, Syllabus Review

Thurs, 4 Oct: *Republic,* Book I

Tues, 9 Oct: *Republic* Book II, entire; Book III through 402a (pp. 35-80)

<paper topics handed out>

Thurs, 11 Oct: *Republic*, rest of Book III; Book IV, entire

Tues, 16 Oct: *Republic* Book V, entire; Book VI through 497e

**Paper 1 Due in Class**

Thurs, 18 Oct: *Republic*, rest of Book VI; Book VII, entire

Tues, 23 Oct: *Republic*, Book VIII; Book IX through 580c

Thurs, 25 Oct: *Republic*, rest of Book IX; Book X

Tues, 30 Oct: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I: 1, 2, 4, 7-8, 13, II, III: 1-9 [Chalk]

Thurs, 1 Nov: *Politics,* Book I, entire; Book II, chaps. 1-5, 7-8

Tues, 6 Nov: *Politics,* Book III, entire

Thurs, 8 Nov: *Politics* Book IV, chaps. 1-13; Book V, chaps. 1, 5-9, 11; Book VI, chaps. 1-4

Tues, 13 Nov: *Politics* Book VII, chaps. 1-4, 7, 9-10, 13-15; Book VIII, chaps. 1-3

<paper topics handed out>

Thurs, 15 Nov: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q. 90-93 (pages 10-40)

Tues, 20 Nov: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q. 94-97 (pages 40-75); II-II Q. 40, 64 (164-72)

**Paper 2 Draft Due in Class: Bring three copies!**

Thurs, 22 Nov: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Tues, 27 Nov: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

**Paper 2 Revisions Due**

Thurs, 29 Nov: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Tues, 4 Dec: Machiavelli, *Discourses* [selections to be posted on Chalk]

**Paper 2 Final Draft Due**

<paper 3 topics handed out>

Thurs, 6 Dec: READING PERIOD (optional review session)

*Finals Week*

Tues, 11 Dec: FINAL EXAM (8-10 AM)

**Paper 3 due by 5 P.M., by e-mail or by showing up for the exam**