

Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change

Justice, the State, and the Individual

The University of Chicago Summer Immersion Program

Instructor: David P. Lyons

Course Description and Goals

This course will introduce you to some of the most important issues in political thought. As the title of the course suggests, topics we will cover include how the individual and his or her political communities do, should, and could relate to each other; possible approaches to the resolution of political and social conflicts and the relative merits of those approaches; how we ought to think about the nature of justice; the relationship between justice, morality, law, and social conventions; the relative strengths of different forms of political organization; the basis, if any, for the legitimacy of political authority; and whether it makes sense to see political life as a means to individual human happiness. To get at these issues we will read some of the most important works of political thought, philosophy, theology, and drama produced in the period before the modern age, from the ancient Athens of Sophocles, Plato and Aristotle; to the political theologies of Paul, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas; to the potentially revolutionary modes of thought introduced by the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, as represented by More and Machiavelli; to a dramatic meditation on political rule and instability in Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

Consistent with the foregoing, by taking this course you should:

- Gain a better understanding of some of the central issues of political thought and political life, including justice, legitimacy, authority, and participation;
- Develop a command of some seminal texts in the history of political thought;
- Acquire ways of thinking about politics and political questions that go beyond the limits of contemporary political disputes;
- Learn to recognize some of your own ideological biases and gain some comfort in subjecting those biases to considered, searching reflection;
- Become a closer and more careful reader and interpreter of complex texts;
- Improve your ability to write essays that display rigorous analysis and present that analysis in clear and direct prose;
- Feel more comfortable expressing your ideas in front of people you don't know especially well; and
- Become a better conversation partner when the topic turns to hard questions of political and social life.

Readings

The following required texts are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op. You must use these editions of the texts.

Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles I*, trans. Elizabeth Wyckoff (Chicago, 2013)
Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1991)
Aristotle, *Politics: A New Translation*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 2017)
Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Penguin, 1972)
Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. & ed. William P. Baumgarth & Richard J. Regan, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2003)
Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (Penguin, 2003)
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1998)
William Shakespeare, *Richard II* (Simon and Schuster, 2016)

The remaining required readings for the course—O'Rourke's essay "Oh, Shut Up," Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language," selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, chapters one through four of *Genesis*, St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, and additional selections from Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*—will be available on Canvas.

Requirements

1. **Participation (30% of your final grade):** I expect you to participate actively and productively in class discussions. To be clear, however, participation is not the same as talking a lot. It is, instead, real conversation about the texts. Conversation is an intellectual operation that requires asking questions, self-reflection, and listening at least as much as making affirmative statements. It also means making space for other people to speak and honestly considering the limits of one's own position. You should, of course, feel free to challenge statements other students or I make, so long as that challenge is made in a spirit of genuine conversation, that is seriously and in good faith.

2. **Four Short Papers (15% each, for a total of 60% of your final grade):** I have posted questions to the Canvas site under "Assignments" to help guide you in our readings. You will be responsible for writing a short paper—350 to 500 words—that responds to four of these questions over the course of the quarter. You will need to submit one such paper in response to our readings in Plato; one in response to our readings in Aristotle or Augustine; and one in response to our readings in Thomas Aquinas, Thomas More, or Machiavelli. The fourth paper may be submitted in response to any of our readings, provided that you only submit one such paper per class day. Papers are due at the start of the class day on which the relevant text is discussed. I will not accept late short papers.

A brief but important note on honesty and integrity. In written work you must cite both direct quotes and paraphrased ideas. Put simply, do not attempt to represent anyone else's ideas as your own original work. Put even more simply, do not plagiarize. This prohibition includes self-plagiarism. Failure to observe this

standard of academic and personal honesty will result in a failing grade for the course. To avoid even the hint of this risk, cite and quote any and all materials you quote and cite any and all materials you paraphrase. If you have questions about the need for citation, please ask me.

3. **Three Short Quizzes (10%):** I will administer three short quizzes during the course, which will be in the form of short answer questions.

Electronics Policy

Electronic devices, like mathematics and nuclear weapons, are necessary evils. Nevertheless, I expect that cell phones will be kept on a silent setting during class. In addition, laptops, e-readers, tablets, and all similar devices are not to be used in class and are to be kept off and out of sight during class.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Introduction; “Politics and the English Language,” and “Oh, Shut Up”
Antigone and *Republic*, Book I, through line 331d (“And with that he went to the sacrifices.”)

Republic, through the end of Book III

Republic, Books IV, V, and VI, through line 497e (“...the opposite of what is done nowadays.”)

Republic, from line 497e through Book IX

Republic, Book X

Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, chs. 1-5, 7 and 13; Book X, chs. 7-9 (on Canvas);

Politics, Book I

Week 2

Politics, Book II, chs. 1-5 (skim); Book III; Book IV, chs. 1-13; Book V, chs. 1-9; and Book VI, 1-6

Tuesday, July 23

Politics, Book VII, 1-5, 7-10, 13-17; and Book VIII, 1-3

Letter to the Romans

Letter to the Romans (continued)

Genesis, chs. 1-4 and *City of God*, Book I, preface and chapters 1-3 and 29-36; Book II, chapters 1-4, 14, 16, 19-23, and 28-29; Book IV, chapters 1-4, 6-9, 15, and 28; Book V, preface and chapters 1, 8-11, and 21-22, and 24-26; Book VIII, chs. 1-12; Book XII, chs. 22-24, 28; Book XIII, chs. 1-3 and 12-15; and Book XIV, chs. 1-4, 11-19, 21-28

City of God, Book XII, chs. 22-24, 28; Book XIII, chs. 1-3 and 12-15; and Book XIV, chs. 1-4, 11-19, 21-28

City of God, Book XV, chs. 1-8; Book XIX, chs. 1-17, 19-22, and 24-28; and Book XXII, ch. 30

Summa Theologica I, Question 1, Article 1; *Summa Theologica* I-II, Question 1, Articles 1, 3, and 7; and Question 5, Articles 1, 3, 5, and 7 (all on Canvas); and *Summa Theologica* I-II, Question 90 and Question 91, Articles 1-5 (in *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 10-24)

Week 3

Summa Theologica I-II, Questions 92-96; *Summa Theologica* II-II, Question 104, Articles 5-6; Question 60, Article 6; and Question 42, Article 2 (in *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 24-69 and 182-189)

Utopia, Book I

Utopia, Book II

The Prince, Dedicatory Letter and chs. I-VIII

The Prince, chs. IX-XIX

The Prince, chs. XX-XXVI

Richard II

Conclusion