“Political science involves the love of justice, the love of glory, and the love of ruling.”
—Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind

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A common opinion on political leaders today is that they are generally craven and deceitful panderers who ultimately want to tyrannize those under their charge. We distrust the speech and deeds of those who rule or wish to rule. But this common opinion might be wrong—in that case, complete mistrust and cynicism would be as unreasonable as blind obedience. How then, can we develop the judgment and taste that we need to determine if any given political regime is good or bad? How do we begin a science of political rule? One way is to read the best, recorded reflections on the lives of political men and women, and talk about those political stories with each other. We will be making an inquiry into the nature and foundation of human association, of the ways in which we live together. And we will most assuredly think about human nature more broadly. In so doing, you will develop a more well-rounded, theoretical perspective on both the political life, and its alternative, the private life. You will be able to bring a philosophical view to bear on contemporary problems of politics, including those analyzed in upper-level political science courses.

Prescribed Reading

Xenophon, Hiero*
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
Torah, Exodus**
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar
Machiavelli, The Prince
Hobbes, Leviathan
Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, The Federalist Papers

* selections will be posted on Moodle
** if you do not have access to a Bible, a good translation is available online at: http://www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0201.htm

Grades

Quizzes – 40% (four quizzes; 10 points each; 40 points total)
(very) short papers – 20% (two papers; 10 points each; 20 points total)
In class final – 40% (40 points)
Course Requirements:

Participation: The study of political philosophy cannot be done in isolation. Only by entering into the conversation among learners (some more experienced than others) can a genuine understanding of the essential problems of political life be achieved. Therefore you must attend class every day, having read the assigned text carefully, and be prepared to respond to the comments of your teacher and fellows. A few additional points: 1) please bring the book that we will be discussing with you to class every day; 2) laptops will not be allowed in class except for official note-takers; and 3) please turn off cell phones. If you have a documented disability, you may contact the Office of Disability Services at disability@lsu.edu, and they will assist you in bringing it to my attention. I will make every effort to accommodate you.

Quizzes/Short Papers: On six occasions (and always on a Friday) you will complete either a quiz on the assigned readings for the week, or a short paper (1-2 pages double spaced) on the same. The quizzes will be taken in class, and the papers will be due in class as well; no e-mail submissions or papers left in my mailbox will be accepted. I will give you some guidance on writing papers for this course before the first one is due. The papers are intended simply to give you some practice in focusing your interpretation of the texts and writing just a few paragraphs on your interpretation.

Final Exam: The final exam will cover all of the material assigned for the semester. The final will consist of multiple choice and essay questions; the precise format of the exam will be explained to you later in the semester.

General Education Requirement

This course is applicable to the University’s General Education Requirement for the social sciences, and as such, it embraces the fundamental aims of a classical liberal education. Such an education seeks to free our minds from the tyranny of unexamined opinion, and enable us to make intelligent, free choices about the ends and means of both private and public life. This course will not only illuminate some of the permanent questions of human existence in community (through the study of certain factual elements of the history of political philosophy), but will have great relevance to contemporary problems as well.

Academic Integrity

I take academic integrity very seriously. Plagiarism is a serious breach of trust; it undermines the entire academic enterprise, and is indeed theft of intellectual property. Section 8.1 of the LSU Code of Student Conduct governs our scholarly practice. http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/code.htm

To assist you in your effort to avoid plagiarism, I will distribute copies of a “Political Science Style Guide.” It was originally produced by Bryan-Paul Frost of the University of Louisiana in accordance with guidelines set by the American Political Science Association for publishing academic work in our field. It is very easy to use, and I believe that you can greatly improve the quality of your written work (and thus, improve your grades) by relying on those guidelines.
Tentative Schedule:

Introduction to the Course

Monday, June 6th

Xenophon's *Hiero*: Tyranny as a way of life?

“Regime is the order, the form, which gives society its character. Regime is therefore a specific manner of life. Regime is the form of life as living together, the manner of living of society and in society, since this manner depends decisively on the predominance of human beings of a certain type, on the manifest domination of society by human beings of a certain type.”

—Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*

Tuesday, June 7th – *Hiero* sections 1 – 5 (pages 3-12).

Wednesday, June 8th – *Hiero* sections 6 – 11 (pages 12-21).


Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: The cultivation of political man.

“Men of the kind who practice politics do not make their sons or any of their friends statesmen. And yet it is reasonable that they should do so if they could. Surely they could confer on their countries no greater benefit, which would remain after them, than by making others good statesmen. Likewise there would be nothing more desirable as far as they themselves are concerned than the ability to make other men statesmen, nor could they do anything more useful even for their best friends.”

—St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Ethics*

Thursday, June 9th – *Nicomachean Ethics* books 1 and 2

Friday June 10th – *Ethics* books 3 and 4

Monday, June 13th – *Ethics* books 5 and 6

Tuesday, June 14th – *Ethics* books 7 and 8

Wednesday, June 15th – *Ethics* books 9 and 10

The Bible, *The Book of Exodus*: Covenant, and the governance of a spiritual community.

“And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordained for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God.”

—Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*

**Thursday, June 16th** – *Exodus* chapters 1-12

**Friday, June 17th** – *Exodus* chapters 13-26

**Monday, June 20th** – *Exodus* chapters 27-40


*Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*: The trouble with becoming a god.

“Caesar was born to do great things, and had a passion after honor, and the many noble exploits he had done did not now serve as an inducement to him to sit still and reap the fruit of his past labors, but were incentives and encouragements to go on, and raised in him ideas of still greater actions, and a desire of new glory, as if the present were all spent.”

—Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*

**Tuesday, June 21st** – *Julius Caesar* Acts I and II

**Wednesday, June 22nd** – *Julius Caesar* Act III

**Thursday, June 23rd** – *Julius Caesar* Act IV


“Since Machiavelli is mortal and cannot be everywhere even while he is alive, he will act through his books. He will rule from afar, although in a sense he will live as prince in the countries he conquers. He is not interested in, let alone preoccupies by, a job for himself. He is not primarily interested in saving Florence or in unifying Italy. He wants to defend “the world” against those who have caused it to become weak.”

—Harvey Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*

**Friday, June 24th** – *The Prince* books 1-6
Monday, June 27th – The Prince books 7-11

Tuesday, June 28th – The Prince books 12-16

Wednesday, June 29th – The Prince books 17-21

Thursday, June 30th – The Prince books 22-26


Hobbes, Leviathan: The rule of the modern sovereign.

“The only way to erect such a common power as may be able to defend themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that they may reduce all their wills by plurality of voices unto one will...This done the multitude so united in one person is called the commonwealth...This is the generation of that great Leviathan, or rather of that Mortal God, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defense.”

—Hobbes, Leviathan

Friday, June 1st – Leviathan sections i-vii

Tuesday, July 5th – Leviathan sections viii-xiii

Wednesday, July 6th – Leviathan sections xiv-xvii

Thursday, July 7th – Leviathan sections xviii-xxi

Friday, July 8th – Leviathan sections xxii-xxvi

Monday, July 11th – Leviathan sections xxvii-xxxi


Hamilton, Madison, and Jay: The Federalist Papers: Can a people rule themselves?

“Publius claims to be the wholehearted but cool-headed partisan of republicanism. But the word republican does not tell us enough about the kind of regime which Publius advocates. That is, the question immediately arises: what kind of republic? How can Publius’ republic be fitted into the traditional distinction of three kinds of rule, by the one, few, or many?

—Martin Diamond, The Federalist

Tuesday, July 12th – Federalist 1 and 6
Wednesday, July 13th – *Federalist* 9 and 10

Thursday, July 14th – *Federalist* 14 and 15

Friday, July 15th – *Federalist* 23 and 37

Monday, July 18th – *Federalist* 38 and 39

Tuesday, July 19th – *Federalist* 47 and 51

Wednesday, July 20th – *Federalist* 63 and 68

Thursday, July 21st – *Federalist* 70, 72, and 78


Conclusion: Final exam review

Friday, July 22nd

Final Exam

TBA

*Enjoy the rest of the summer!*