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

Instructor: Jonathan LeBlanc  
email: jlebl88@tigers.lsu.edu  
office: 326 Stubbs Hall  
office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm or by appointment

Our knowledge of contemporary political leaders often causes us to mistrust the speech and deeds of those who hold or wish to hold political office. But complete mistrust and cynicism is as unreasonable as uncritical and blind support. In any case, we expect our rulers to uphold high standards of justice and right action if they wish to remain our rulers. Sustained reflection on the quest for justice and right action is essential to the self-understanding of the statesman. Likewise, we are obligated to reflect upon the speech and deeds of those who mastered “the art of politics” if we are to judge the soundness of the words and actions of political men and women in our time. This semester we will pursue that goal, by carefully reading and discussing a few of the best books and speeches on the subject of political rule. It is hoped that by the end of this course you will be able to better judge the intentions that lie behind the policies enacted by political leaders now and in the future.

Prescribed Reading

Xenophon, Hiero*  
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics  
Torah, Exodus**  
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar  
Machiavelli, The Prince  
Hobbes, Leviathan  
Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, The Federalist Papers  
Course packet including speeches by: Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, and Ronald Reagan*

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

Grades

Quizzes/short papers – 50% (100 points)  
Take home midterm – 20% (40 points)  
In class final – 30% (60 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, please bring it to my attention and I will make every effort to accommodate you.

Quizzes/Short Papers: On ten 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 explain what makes for a good paper early in the semester.

Midterm Exam: The midterm examination will consist of four questions, drawn from the material assigned up to the beginning of midterms week, to be answered in essay format. Four questions will be provided; two must be answered. The midterm will be a take-home exam; you may use your books and notes, but you are not allowed to consult anyone else in writing your essays. The questions will be given to you in class on Friday, October 8th, and will be due by 11:00 AM on Friday, October 15th. You may e-mail your exam to me (jlebl88@tigers.lsu.edu).

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 post on Moodle 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, August 23rd

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, August 25th – *Hiero* sections 1 – 5 (pages 3-12).

Friday, August 27th – *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*

Monday, August 30th – *Nicomachean Ethics* books 1 and 2

Wednesday, September 1st – *Ethics* books 3 and 4

Friday, September 3rd – *Ethics* books 5 and 6

Monday, September 6th – *Labor Day, no class*

Wednesday, September 8th – *Ethics* books 7 and 8

Friday, September 10th – *Ethics* books 9 and 10

The Torah, *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*

**Monday, September 13th – Exodus chapters 1-12**

**Wednesday, September 15th – Exodus chapters 13-26**

**Friday, September 17th – 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*

**Monday, September 20th – Julius Caesar Acts I and II**

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

**Friday, September 24th – 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 preoccupied 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*
Monday, September 27th – *The Prince* books 1-6

Wednesday, September 29th – *The Prince* books 7-11

Friday, October 1st – *The Prince* books 12-16

Monday, October 4th – *The Prince* books 17-21

Wednesday, October 6th – *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, October 8th – *Leviathan* sections i-vii

Monday, October 11th – *Leviathan* sections viii-xiii

Wednesday, October 13th – *Leviathan* sections xiv-xvii

Friday, October 15th – *Leviathan* sections xviii-xxi

Monday, October 18th – *Leviathan* sections xxii-xxvi

Wednesday, October 20th – *Leviathan* sections xxvii-xxx


**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*

**Monday, October 25th** – *Federalist* 1 and 6

**Wednesday, October 27th** – *Federalist* 9 and 10

**Friday, October 29th** – *Federalist* 14 and 15

**Monday, November 1st** – *Federalist* 23 and 37

**Wednesday, November 3rd** – *Federalist* 38 and 39

**Friday, November 5th** – *Federalist* 47 and 51

**Monday, November 8th** – *Federalist* 63 and 68

**Wednesday, November 10th** – *Federalist* 70, 72, and 78


**Lincoln, FDR, Teddy Roosevelt, Churchill, & Reagan**: The speech of modern statesmen.

“The contrast between the indomitable and magnanimous statesman and the insane tyrant—this spectacle in its clear simplicity was one of the greatest lessons which men can learn, at any time. For we are supposed to train ourselves and others in seeing things as they are, and this means above all in seeing their greatness and misery, their excellence and their vileness, their nobility and their triumphs, and therefore never to mistake mediocrity, however brilliant, for true greatness.”

—spontaneous remarks by Leo Strauss on hearing of the death of Churchill.

**Friday, November 12th** – **no class, I am attending a conference**

**Monday, November 15th** – Abraham Lincoln, “A House Divided”

**Wednesday, November 17th** – Teddy Roosevelt, “The Duties of American Citizenship”

**Friday, November 19th** – Winston Churchill, “On the Munich Agreement”

**Monday, November 22nd** – Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms”

**Monday, November 29th** – Ronald Reagan, “The Evil Empire”

**Wednesday, December 1st and Friday, December 3rd** – review for final exam