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LAW: DIVINE, NATURAL, AND MAN-MADE

As a way to talk intelligently about ancient and medieval political philosophy, it seems reasonable to focus on a particular topic. Since politics involves living together in an orderly manner, laws are of central importance. Yet law may be something more than arrangements contrived by human beings. It may have its roots in nature or even in divine commandments. The possibility of the latter two, however much scoffed at today, influenced thinking in both the ancient or classical period and in the medieval continuation of classical antiquity. It also had repercussions in modern times when the founders of the opinions that have such sway today sought to destroy the medieval and classical natural law tradition as well as the tradition that looked to divine law for guidance.

For guidance in these matters, we can do no better than look to Plato's dialogue, *Laws*. It has long been considered the best source for a complete discussion of law and law-making, even of divine law-making. In addition, we will examine a short Platonic dialogue that serves as a preface to the *Laws*, the *Minos*, another short Platonic dialogue that serves as an appendix or postface to the *Laws*, the *Epinomis*, and the unusual *Summary of Plato's "Laws"* by the noted medieval philosopher of the Arabic/Islamic tradition, Alfarabi. And, so as to gain some sense of an alternative to Platonic political philosophy, as well as to gain a broader view of the tradition, we will study Aristotle's famous book on politics and law-giving with its critique of Plato.

The reading to be covered in this course is difficult and long, and students are expected to be prepared to participate intelligently in the discussion at each class. To prepare for class, it will be necessary to read the assigned material, take notes, and organize on paper the general lines of argument within the readings – tasks that will demand at least 9 hours of effort for each class.

Students desiring credit must write two papers. One, to be presented or handed in at the beginning of one of class sessions 2-14, should provide a critical analysis of the material for that session in about 1750-2000 words (7-8 double-spaced pages). The other, of 3500-3750 words in length (14-15 double-spaced pages), should focus on a problem in Plato's *Laws* or on the light Alfarabi and Aristotle shed on that work. Students should, by all means, take advantage of office hours both to become acquainted with me and to discuss any problems that arise.

The short paper will count for 40% of the grade, the long paper for 50%, and intelligent contribution to class discussion for 10%.

For the record:

1. The UMD Code of Academic Integrity will be enforced. In short, no cheating. See www.inform.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/po/code_acinteg.html.
2. Students with disabilities should see the instructor. Their needs will be accommodated.
3. The UMD policy of respecting the religious observances of students will be followed.

READING SCHEDULE

Class 1, August 31	Introduction, plus Plato, <i>Minos</i> and Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. 1
Class 2, September 7	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 1-2
Class 3, September 14	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 3-4 (676a-718a)
Class 4, September 21	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 4-6 (718a-771a)
Class 5, September 28	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 6-7 (771a-824c)
Class 6, October 5	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 8-9
Class 7, October 12	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bk. 10
Class 8, October 19	Plato, <i>Laws</i> , Bks. 11-12
Class 9, October 26	Plato, <i>Epinomis</i> , Over-view of <i>Laws</i>
Class 10, November 2	Alfarabi, <i>Summary of Plato's "Laws"</i>
Class 11, November 9	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Bks. 1-2
Class 12, November 16	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Bks. 3-4

NOTE WELL!! NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 23, FOR THANKSGIVING TRAVEL

Class 13, November 30	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Bks. 5-6
Class 14, December 7	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Bks. 7-8

DECEMBER 14, SECOND PAPER DUE

Suggested additional reading:

Plato, *Republic* plus *Euthyphro*, *Apology of Socrates*, and *Crito*
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
 Cicero, *Republic* and *Laws*
 Aristophanes, *Clouds*
 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*

BOOKS TO ORDER

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), ISBN 0-226-02669-8. \$15.00

Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), ISBN 0-226-67110-0. \$25.00

Leo Strauss, *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 0-226-77698-0. \$19.00