

GVPT 741
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Fall, 2007
Wednesday, 6:30-9:15 p.m.
Office hours: Wednesday, 4:00-5:30 p.m.
Tydings 1149, tel. 301 405-4110

Politics, Education for Citizenship, and Character Formation

This course is designed to provide a survey or overview of ancient and medieval political philosophy, albeit one in which we examine a number of primary sources. To bring some order to an otherwise vast amount of literature, it seems reasonable to focus on a particular topic. One theme common to many of the writings of this period is how to educate citizens and form their character for political life together. It raises questions about human nature and the extent to which it can be molded as well as the character of the universe, especially whether it is accessible to unaided human reason. Because the topic continued to interest some modern political philosophers, even as they distanced themselves from the ancient and medieval writers, it also provides a means of reflecting upon the history of political philosophy from its beginnings until recent times.

We will begin with a comedy by Aristophanes, *Assembly of Women*, then turn to Plato's *Republic*. Subsequently, we will examine Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's Republic* and finish the semester by considering how Alfarabi seeks to bring together – perhaps to harmonize – the teaching of Plato and Aristotle. Aristophanes provides a light touch in his ribald treatment of Socrates's more problematic suggestion for founding a just city, while Averroes focuses on the same topic to criticize the society of his day. Comedy and indignation aside, the topics covered in these works raise important questions about human nature and the limits of politics.

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 arising in two of the works. Students should by all means take advantage of office hours to become acquainted with me, talk about paper topics, and 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 29	Introduction
Class 2, September 5	Aristophanes, <i>Assembly of Women</i>
Class 3, September 12	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 1
Class 4, September 19	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 2-3
Class 5, September 26	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 4-5
Class 6, October 3	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 6-7
Class 7, October 10	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 8-9
Class 8, October 17	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 10
Class 9, October 24	Averroes, <i>Commentary on Plato's Republic</i> , Treatise 1
Class 10, October 31	Averroes, <i>Commentary on Plato's Republic</i> , Treatise 2
Class 11, November 7	Averroes, <i>Commentary on Plato's Republic</i> , Treatise 3
Class 12, November 14	Alfarabi, <i>Attainment of Happiness</i> , Part 1

NOTE WELL!! NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 21, FOR THANKSGIVING TRAVEL

Class 13, November 28	Alfarabi, <i>Attainment of Happiness</i> , Part 2
Class 14, December 5	Alfarabi, <i>Attainment of Happiness</i> , Part 3
Class 15, December 12	Alfarabi, <i>Attainment of Happiness</i> , Part 4

DECEMBER 19, 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

Alfarabi, Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). ISBN 0-8014-9716-1. \$14.00.

Aristophanes, *The Complete Plays*, trans. Paul Roche (New American Library), ISBN 0-451-21409-9.

Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, trans. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), Paper. ISBN: 978-0-8014-8975-4. \$16.95. Agora Editions.

Plato, *Republic*, trans. Joe Sachs ((Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2007). ISBN 978-1-58510-261-7.

Book order submitted, April 30, 2007

Desk copy order submitted, April 30, 2007

Aristophanes and Plato desk copies received, May 9, 2007

Alfarabi and Averroes desk copies received, May 16, 2007

Recommended

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003). Paper, \$5.95. ISBN: 978-0-87220-603-8.