

**The Study of Political Philosophy: Ancient and Modern
Philosophy and its Critics
GVPT 241
Department of Government and Politics
University of Maryland
Summer 2007
T & Th: 4:00pm- 7:20pm, Tydings 1102**

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This is a course intended to introduce you to the history of political thought through ancient and modern authors. Due to the brevity of a summer course, we will limit our study to only a handful of thinkers. This should allow us to read these texts with the greatest care, and to gain an appreciation for a handful of important themes in the history of political philosophy.

Philosophy has been called, from time to time, either useless, vicious, or both. We will therefore examine some attacks on philosophy and see whether philosophy can provide for itself an adequate apology. Can philosophy tell us anything about how we ought to live our lives either individually or collectively? Is it useful for good politics or a threat to all existing regimes? Can nature provide any guidance in our attempt to answer this question, or is nature something to be overcome, conquered? Or is there no such thing as nature, and we should therefore set out to create our own horizons? At stake is the greater question, always looming in the background, of how one ought to live. Should one lead the contemplative life of the philosopher, or the passionate life of an artist? Our authors will touch on these questions and hopefully provide us with some insight into the human condition and make us aware of fundamental alternatives to these most important questions.

I. Required Texts

Please Note: I apologize, but I must insist that you purchase the editions listed below. We will read together in class a great deal, and it is imperative to remain on the same page.

Hesse, Hermann. *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Trans. by Ursule Molinaro. Picador Publishing, NY: 2003. ISBN: 0312421672

Machiavelli. *Mandragola*. Trans. by Mera J. Flaumenhaft. Waveland Press, Long Grove, IL: 1981. ISBN: 0917974573

Machiavelli. *Prince*, 2nd Ed. Trans. by Harvey C. Mansfield. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1998. ISBN: 0226500446

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Translated and Edited by Walter Kaufman. Penguin Books, New York: 1977. ISBN: 0140150625

Plato. *Gorgias*. Trans. James H. Nichols. Cornell University Press, Ithaca: 1988. ISBN: 0801485274

Plato. *Symposium*. Trans. by Seth Benardete. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 2001. ISBN: 0226042758

Strunk & White. *Elements of Style*. Any edition.

West, Thomas G., and Grace Starry West. *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY: 1998. ISBN: 0801485746

II. Course Requirements

1. Preparation & Participation (10%)
2. First Essay (20%) 4-6 pages.
Due date: June 19
3. Second Essay (20%) 4-6 pages.
Due date: July 3
4. Final Essay (30%) 8-10 pages.
Due date: July 14
5. Quizzes (20%)

Class Preparation, Participation, and Attendance: Attendance is mandatory: missing two classes will result in a failing grade. Your primary task is to come to class each day having reading very carefully and to be prepared to talk intelligently about the material. Do not come to class having read the text only once. Reread it. Take notes as you read, and outline arguments. Think about what you are reading, and reflect on the human importance of it. Analyze the arguments. Are they persuasive? Do they convince you? Above all, come prepared. Class discussion is imperative. I will do my best to involve everyone in class discussion. From time to time, I will offer interpretation. My interpretation, however, is not final. Stand your ground: if you think my interpretation is wrong, say so. The same goes for each other. Do not hesitate to challenge your fellow students, and be prepared to be challenged. You will find that once you get over any initial discomfort you may have, it is quite pleasant to engage in rational argument.

Essays: These essays are meant to encourage you to wrestle with the text. I expect papers that are well-argued, original, succinct, and beautiful. I want to enjoy reading them. I am not looking for summary; we have all read the text. Make an argument. You

should feel free to take me to task. Agree or disagree with interpretations offered in class. I encourage you to write and rewrite, read and proofread. I will count off for bad arguments. I will also hold you accountable to the highest standards of style. This includes grammar. Grammatical mistakes often indicate a lack of time and effort spent on a paper. One of the great benefits of this course is that you will hopefully learn—in addition to a something about Political Thought—how to read and write carefully. These are great tools that will aid you in whatever you pursue.

Under no circumstances whatsoever will papers be accepted after the dates listed above.

Quizzes. There will be, from time to time, Pop Quizzes. These are simple and meant only to reveal to me whether you in fact have read the text. The better the grades, attendance, and participation are, the fewer the quizzes we will have.

Miscellanea:

1. Academic Dishonesty: All work must be done in strict accordance with the letter and spirit of the honor code of the University of Maryland. All violations will be prosecuted *to the fullest extent possible*. If you have any doubts or questions whatsoever as to what constitutes a violation, feel free to speak to me ahead of time. When writing papers, you are not permitted to use *any* outside sources. You are to remain *solely* within the confines of the text at hand. Part of this course is learning how to think for oneself about the issues raised in the text, and this can only be clouded by the judgment of others.
2. Students with documented disabilities should see the instructor. Their needs will be accommodated.
3. The UMD policy of respecting the religious observances of students or their participation in university activities will be followed. You must inform me ahead of time.

III. Schedule of Readings

June 5	<i>Clouds</i>
June 7	<i>Apology</i>
June 12	Nietzsche, selections
June 14	Nietzsche, selections
June 19	<i>Narcissus and Goldmund</i>
June 21	<i>Narcissus and Goldmund</i>
June 26	<i>Symposium</i>
June 28	<i>Symposium</i>
July 3	<i>Mandragola</i>
July 5	<i>Prince</i>
July 10	<i>Gorgias</i>
July 12	<i>Gorgias</i>