

SCHOOL FOR NEW LEARNING

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

**AI 273 JUSTICE AND POLITICS: Plato and Machiavelli and the
Tradition of Political Philosophy**

Semester: Winter 2009

Location: Loop Campus

Faculty: Robert E. Shapiro, Esq.
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Day/Time: Tuesday, 1/6–3/10/09
6:00-9:00 p.m.

Course Description:

Are politics ever just? Should they be? What is justice? Throughout the ages, philosophers and statesmen have provided different answers to these fundamental questions. This course will explore the role of justice in politics, using as a guide the best known works of two great thinkers in the “tradition” of political philosophy, one from ancient political philosophy and one at the origins of modern thought.

Plato’s Republic and Machiavelli’s The Prince appear to offer very different answers to the question “what is justice?” what its role should be in politics and what kinds of political regimes are therefore desirable. At the same time they at least seem to agree that these are the right questions. By exploring their works, students will grapple with these basic questions, probe Plato’s and Machiavelli’s differing approaches to the role of justice in politics, explore their own conceptions of these critical issues and wrestle with the role justice plays and should play in current political events. In doing so, they will also gain an introduction to the tradition of western political philosophy as reflected in two of its most influential thinkers.

Mr. Shapiro is a practising lawyer. Before and while attending law school he studied political philosophy and American political thought at Harvard University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Chicago. His master’s thesis was on Plato’s dialogue, the Gorgias, and he has published articles on issues in American politics and the American legal system. While practising law, Mr. Shapiro has continued his studies, emphasizing works in the tradition of political philosophy, the American Founding and Civil War and the history of the common law.

Competencies Offered: A-3-F, A-4, H-3-A, F-X

A-3-F:	Can compare two or more philosophical perspectives on the relationship of the individual to the community
A-4:	Can analyze a problem using two different ethical systems
H-3-A:	Can use two or more theories of human psychology to understand and solve problems
F-X:	Elective (to be discussed with instructor)

Learning Tools and Competency Goals:

- A. Two texts: Plato, The Republic, ed. A. Bloom (Basic Books 1968) Machiavelli, The Prince, ed. H. Mansfield (U. of Chicago, 1985);
- B. Classroom discussions and lectures; and
- C. Student presentations on portions of the readings

Critical to the course is a careful study of the argument and drama of the two works under consideration. For all of the competencies, the goal is to learn how to decipher the intention of the author, explaining how each would solve the problem of justice in politics and evaluating those solutions with reference to experiences in everyday life.

For competency A-3-F, students will focus on the challenge posed by Machiavelli to the view Plato seems to state regarding the relationship between the individual person and the city and thereby explore the “argument” in the tradition between the ancient and modern views of political life and how one should live. Students will be asked to consider which of these two fundamentally different approaches better “solves” the issues of the current day.

For competency A-4, students will look at the nature of justice as understood by Plato and Machiavelli and how it relates to the larger political systems discussed. Students will examine our own “democratic” system in this context.

For competency H-3-A, students will concentrate on how best to understand human nature, in terms of the “soul” as described by Plato or the “man” and “humors” described by Machiavelli. They should also consider what each approach implies for what is truly “the best life,” both as Plato and Machiavelli present it and as seems to make sense in the contemporary world.

Each class will focus on a small segment of one of the texts. In most cases, a few students will be asked to be particularly prepared to discuss a specific portion of the segment under discussion. This will be followed by classroom discussion of the author’s intention and meaning, the merits of the ideas and their application to current political problems. Mr. Shapiro

will also lecture on certain aspects of the text that may be useful for understanding the author's approach.

Criteria for Demonstration of Competence:

1. Readings;
2. Regular classroom attendance and participation;
3. Two classes in which the student will be expected to be prepared on a particular portion of the week's reading; and
4. A final paper of approximately five pages demonstrating careful study of a portion of the text or a theme from the texts and/or contrasting the treatment of that theme in the two works, as appropriate for the competencies. This paper will be due approximately one week after the final class.

All four requirements must be met by each student no matter what competencies are being pursued, but a student will satisfy the requirements for all competencies he or she selects within the two special class periods for that student and one paper. For the final paper, careful reading of a small section of the texts, showing an attention to and appreciation of the specific issues it raises and its implications for modern day problems, is preferred to a more generalized discourse on the works in question. All paper topics will be discussed in advance with Mr. Shapiro.

Mr. Shapiro will adhere rigorously to the University's guidelines on student integrity found in the Student Handbook.

Evaluation:

For grading purposes, evaluation will depend roughly on the following percentages:

Classroom Participation	30%
Oral Presentations	30%
Final Paper	40%

Schedule of Classes:

Class 1: January 6

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Book I

Topic: What is justice? How shall I live?

Class Discussion: We will review prevailing opinions on the nature of justice. Mr. Shapiro will provide an introduction to The Republic with reference to the title, the dialogue form and the drama of Book I. We will consider the first dramatic incident in Book I.

Class 2: January 13

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Book I

Topic: The three definitions of justice

Class Discussion: We will discuss the three definitions of justice presented by Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus in Book I and the transition to Book II

Student Presentations:

Definition of Justice by Cephalus

Definition of Justice by Polemarchus

Definition of Justice by Thrasymachus

Class 3: January 20

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books II and III

Topic: The city in speech

Class Discussion: We will discuss the project undertaken by the dialogue's participants and review Socrates' presentation of eros and spiritedness, his contrast of music and gymnastic, his banishment of poetry and his discussion of the "noble lie."

Student Presentations:

Speech of Glaucon
Speech of Adeimantus
City of Pigs

Class 4: January 27

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books IV and V

Topic: The relationship between philosophy and politics

Class Discussion: We will explore why Socrates uses a metaphorical approach to his description of philosophy and what this means for philosophy and the concept of the ideas.

Student Presentations:

Adeimantus' objection
Justice in the city and man
The story of Leontius
First wave
Second wave

Class 5: February 3

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books VI and VII

Topic: Philosophy and the ideas

Class Discussion: We will explore why Socrates uses a metaphorical approach to his description of philosophy and what this means for philosophy and the concept of the ideas.

Student Presentations:

Adeimantus' new objection
Image of ship
Divided line
Cave allegory

Class 6: February 10

Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books VIII - X; Machiavelli, The Prince, Dedicatory Epistle

Topic: The cycle of regimes

Class Discussion: We will compare philosophy and tyranny in Socrates' approach, review the cycle of regimes and consider why Socrates re-introduces poetry into his city in speech.

Student Presentations:

Monarchy and timocracy
Democracy and tyranny
Machiavelli's gift
Mountains and valleys

Class 7: February 17

Reading: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 1-8

Topic: The shock of the modern

Class Discussion: We will contrast Machiavelli's approach with Plato's, focusing on the shift from ends to origins and the development of a new political science. We will explore what Machiavelli means by the phrase "new modes and orders."

Student Presentations:

Chapter 1
Mistake of the French
Armed and unarmed prophets
Agathocles & Oliverotto

Class 8: February 24

Reading: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 9-15

Topic: Machiavelli's arms and virtue

Class Discussion: We will explore Machiavelli's analysis of the types of arms; his revolutionary teaching on virtue

Student Presentations:

Story of David
"New" Chapter 15

Class 9:

March 3

Reading: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 16-23

Topic: Machiavelli's virtue, prudence

Class Discussion: We will consider the meaning of Machiavelli's revolutionary views on moral and intellectual virtue

Student Presentations:

Machiavelli's virtue
Machiavelli's advisers

Class 10:

March 10

Reading: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 24-26

Topic: Machiavelli's fortune

Class Discussion: We will consider Machiavelli's view of fortune

Student Presentations:

Can fortune be conquered?
Machiavelli's miracles