

POLS 280//PHIL 280
TTh 10:00-11:50, MI 213
Office: MI 214

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Office Hours: Tues. 12-1pm; Wed. 11:15am-12:15pm; Thur. 6-7pm; other times – email me

Classical Justice Spring 2018

Course Description

This class involves an examination of classical political philosophy, considering questions pertaining to justice, virtue, freedom, equality, gender, the purpose and scope of political authority, citizenship, education, poetry, as well as the relationship between the philosophical individual and the political community. It emphasizes critical analysis of ancient and medieval philosophical texts and class discussion.

Above all else, the course asks after the meaning and actualization of justice: what is justice?; how is it to be achieved?; what is justice on the individual and communal levels, and how are those related?; what is the role of the individual in achieving justice?; how is justice differentiated among various social groups and classes? We pursue these questions through a sustained engagement with ancient and medieval political theory, along with several contemporary scholars' analyses of the thinkers and histories we will study. While the class is primarily focused on close reading of historical texts, we will also take opportunities to think through how these classical philosophers can help us rethink concerns about justice and politics in our shared political world today.

At the same time, this course challenges the conventional Eurocentric notion of classical justice, or of ancient and medieval political theory/philosophy. In addition to canonical European thinkers, we also spend several class sessions with classical Chinese philosophy, and multiple sessions with the Islamic philosopher Alfarabi; at the very end of the semester we consider the possible medieval origins of modern race and racism. We thus conceptualize the question of classical justice not as an exclusively white European project, but rather as a global pursuit.

This is a writing-intensive course. This class will primarily be a discussion format, with the occasional lecture. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. **Bring the relevant text to class, always!**

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

- Analyzing the ancient and medieval political theoretical tradition
- Improving skills in reading and comprehending theoretical texts, especially capacities for close reading and interpretation
- Developing the capability to write well-argued analytical essays dealing with political theoretical questions and concepts

- Thinking critically and inquisitively, and developing a sense of the political theory “canon” as a terrain of contested interpretation
- Becoming interested in controversy over ideas, in different historical and cultural contexts, as worthy of serious and deep exploration in its own right but also acutely relevant to the political controversies of today
- Improving the ability to engage in dialogue and debate through discussions in class and various modes of writing for class
- Thinking more systematically and analytically about one’s own political beliefs

Evaluation

- Class citizenship: 25%
- Class blog: 25%
- Take-home essays (2 essays at 15% each): 30%
- Final assignment: 20%

Assignments

- **Class citizenship (25% of grade)**: I care about whether you come to class and the role you play in it; our class will be most rewarding if you attend regularly, and if you are an active citizen. I expect you to come on time, to listen, and to participate. After three absences, the class citizenship component of your grade will decrease. Class citizenship, however, entails more than just showing up, it also means participating in class.
 - Participation can take many different forms: asking questions about unclear concepts or materials, raising ideas we as a class or the author may have overlooked, respectfully sharing opinions, volunteering to read passages when asked, visiting office hours, contributing to class discussions in large and small groups without monopolizing conversations, paying attention to me and to your classmates, and taking risks when there are questions asked that have no clear answers. Participation does not only mean talking—it also means working to be aware of the space you inhabit and how you can best contribute to an atmosphere of supportive learning.
 - I understand that speaking in class can be challenging. We will have a number of different kinds of discussions to encourage participation, and you should use the blog as a way of preparing ideas to bring to our class sessions. Regularly coming to office hours and discussing the readings can contribute to your class citizenship grade as well, as does asking questions in class.
 - Last but not least, class citizenship means being receptive of and interested in others’ political and philosophical perspectives, respectful of experiences different than your own, and open to having others disagree with you. Disagreement is inevitable in a political theory class (including with me!), and can be incredibly productive so long as it proceeds collegially.
- **Class Blog (25% of grade)**: Throughout the semester, we will write a class blog, using WordPress. During the first week of class, I will lead a brief WordPress tutorial and distribute instructions on joining WordPress and becoming a member of the blog. You are required to write one post of at least 300 words + 1-3 discussion questions once per week; in addition, you must make 4 comments per week on others’ posts. Posts are due by midnight the night before class, on the readings to be discussed the next day; comments can be made at

any time during the week. If your last name starts with the letters A-H, you will post for class on Tuesday; if your last name starts with the letters I-Z, you will post for class on Thursday. The blog starts the week of Jan. 30, although you can post on Jan. 25 for some early extra credit.

The blog is *not* intended to be a place for you to summarize the readings, but rather to interpret and analyze them. Your blog posts can take many forms: offer a critique of the reading, connect it to contemporary or historical events, relate it to earlier readings in the course, offer a close reading of an especially important or interesting passage, and much more. We will use responses and discussion questions in each class session. A secondary goal of the blog is to familiarize you with the WordPress platform, gaining a skill set relevant for work in the many advocacy groups, organizations, and businesses that use WordPress or similar content management systems/web platforms. In order to encourage you to grapple with difficult ideas and challenge your own views, this will be a private blog visible only to our class.

- **Take-Home Essays (2 essays, each essay worth 15% of grade; 30% total):** You will write two take-home essays of approximately 2000 words each. For each day (not class period) an essay is late, it loses one letter grade. Essays are due on March 8 and April 24; you will have at least one week with the assignment before it is due.
- **Final assignment (20% of grade):** For your final assignment, you will write a paper of approximately 3000 words, or create an alternate final project. You will receive more information before Spring Break.

Texts

The following list of books is required. They are available in the bookstore, and are readily available to order elsewhere. If you plan to buy them online, please be sure to buy the same edition as listed below (search by the ISBN number). We will read them in the order listed. All other readings will be provided on the course Moodle.

- *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Ivanhoe and Van Norden. Hackett 2nd edition (ISBN 978-0-87220-780-6)
- Plato, *The Trial & Death of Socrates*, trans. Grube. Hackett (ISBN 9780872205543)
- Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, ed. Allan Bloom. Basic Books 2nd edition (ISBN 9780465069347) or 3rd edition (ISBN 978-0465094080)
- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Barker and Stalley. Oxford World Classics Edition (ISBN 9780199538737)

Loud Bodies Project

This semester all of my classes are participating in the Loud Bodies Project, an initiative to bring stim toys into the classroom and encourage all students to participate to their fullest capacity. Every day, I will bring a bag of stim toys into the classroom, and I encourage you to use them, to bring your own toys if you have them, and to think about what else would help you or any other students reach their full potential in the classroom. Around spring break, I'll be sending everyone a survey to assess how the project is going and what it can improve in the future. If you have any questions or concerns about the project, talk to me or email the coordinator, Eli Johnson, at

johnsonr1@beloit.edu. For more information on neurodiversity, see <http://neurocosmopolitanism.com/neurodiversity-some-basic-terms-definitions/>

Technology

Numerous studies (for example [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#); for an overview see [here](#)) demonstrate that, on aggregate, students taking notes by hand learn information more effectively and receive higher grades than those taking notes on computer, even when those on devices are exclusively focused on class tasks. Moreover, many of us (myself certainly included!) find it difficult to pull ourselves away from email, social media, news, etc. when we have screens in front of us. Finally, in a class that will involve lots of discussion with one another, screens impede the conversations that will be essential to our experience in the course this semester. You need to be able to devote your full attention to your peers, the text, and the ideas we are discussing.

Consequently, in general there will be **no phones, tablets/iPads, or laptops in the classroom**. There are **exceptions** to this rule. **Most importantly, if you have a documented need or accommodation to use an electronic device in class, you are more than welcome to do so.** Additionally, on the times when I lecture, anyone is welcome to take notes on an electronic device, but it should be put away for class conversations, small group work, etc. If you think that using such a device beyond lectures is essential to your success in the course, come talk to me about it.

Because we will not be utilizing screens in the classroom, **you need to bring a hard copy of the texts to every class, including the PDFs we are reading.** If you would like to partner with one other person to alternate printing out PDFs between you, that is fine with me so long as there is one printed copy for every two people in class, and so long as you bring notes on the reading to class. This policy is open to revision as the semester unfolds.

Disability Accommodations and Tutoring

If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), [608-363-2572](tel:608-363-2572), learning@beloit.edu or make an appointment through joydeleon.youcanbook.me. For accommodations in my class, you are to bring me an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.

Writing Advising

The Writing Center has student writers who are trained tutors ready to work with you collaboratively on any stage of your writing in this class--from brainstorming to final editing. It's a friendly and supportive place, and their goal is to help you to improve your writing and become a better writer. You can make an appointment here: [Writing Center Appointments](#).

Policy on Inclusivity at Beloit College

Inclusivity is a demonstration of equity and social justice through awareness, understanding, and respect for the differences in identity, culture, background, experience, and socialization, and the ways in which these forms of difference impact how we live and learn. Inclusivity requires equitable, institution-wide representation and access to resources. In practice, this manifests itself by each individual being aware of, committed to, and responsible for the well-being and care of all students, staff, and faculty.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

Academic misconduct and dishonesty are serious offenses. Such acts violate the trust that forms the foundation of the student-teacher relationship, they rob students of opportunities to learn, and they damage the reputation of the College as a whole. In particular, plagiarism constitutes intellectual theft and is completely unacceptable. I expect that you will follow Beloit's policy on academic honesty printed in the Student Handbook. Any assignments or exams that violate this policy will receive a failing grade. I will also notify the Dean of Students of any cases of academic dishonesty, and she will determine any further penalties.

Other course policies and notes

- If a student has a desired name that is not listed on my course roster, please let me know. Students are encouraged to notify me of their gender pronouns. I use he/him/his pronouns.
- Check your email regularly.
- I strongly encourage you to come visit my office hours; if the times listed don't work, email me so we can figure out another time to meet.
- If you are struggling with any aspect of the course, talk to me sooner rather than later so we can work on the ways to best help you. Please also consider requesting a Peer Tutor, working with the Writing Center, or seeking assistance from Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.
- If you would like a little bit of extra credit, email me a cute animal picture by 10am on January 25 to demonstrate that you have read the fine print of the syllabus
- If a religious holiday that you observe conflicts with an assignment, please let me know in advance so that we may discuss alternate options.

READING SCHEDULE

Subject to changes, which will be announced in class and over e-mail. When there are multiple readings assigned, please read in the order listed below.

Jan. 23

- Welcome, introductions, overview of the class
- In-class: group read Scott Samuelson, "Why I Teach Plato to Plumbers," *The Atlantic* (2014)

Jan. 25: Why study classical justice?

- Danielle Allen, "Brotherhood, Love, and Political Friendship," excerpts, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (2004)
- Wendy Brown, "Political Idealization and its Discontents," *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (2005)
 - Read pp. 17-27 and 34-36

- *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, “Introduction”

I. Classical Chinese Philosophy

Jan. 30: Kongzi

- Introduction to Kongzi (Confucius), “The Analects”, pp. 1-3
- Kongzi (Confucius), “The Analects,” Books One—Twelve

Feb. 1: Kongzi, continued and beginning of Mengzi

Note: for the first half of class, we will meet in Richardson Auditorium for a joint session with Prof. John Rapp’s “China: The Long Revolution” class

- Kongzi, “The Analects,” Books Thirteen—end
- Mengzi (Mencius), Introduction to Mengzi (pp. 115-7)
- Mengzi, Book One

Feb. 6: Mengzi, continued

- Mengzi, Book Two-end

Feb. 8: Laozi

- Laozi, “The Daodejing”, Introduction and full text

II. Socrates, Plato, and Justice

Feb. 13

- *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, read *Apology* and *Crito*

Feb. 15

- Plato, *Republic*, Book I

Feb. 20

- *Republic*, Books II-III

Feb. 22

- *Republic*, Books IV-V

Feb. 27

- *Republic*, Books VI-VII

March 1

- *Republic*, Books VIII-IX

March 6 (no blog post required for this day; you may write one for extra credit)

- Rachana Kamtekar, “Distinction Without a Difference? Race and *Genos* in Plato.” In *Philosophers and Race: Critical Essays*, ed. Ward and Lott (2012)
- Arlene Saxenhouse, “The Philosopher and the Female in the Political Thought of Plato,” In *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, ed. Tuana (1994)
- Wendy Brown, “‘Supposing Truth Were a Woman...’: Plato’s Subversion of Masculine Discourse.” In *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, ed. Tuana (1994)

March 8

Essay I due

- In-class: Introduction to Aristotle’s *Politics* (no reading)

SPRING BREAK

III. Aristotle, Citizenship, and Justice

March 20

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I
- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II.A.1

March 22

- *Politics*, Book III

March 27

- *Politics*, Book IV

March 29

- *Politics*, Book V.A-V.D

April 3

- *Politics*, Book V.E
- *Politics*, Book VI.A
- *Politics*, Book VII.A
- *Politics*, Book VII.C

April 5

- Wendy Brown, "Aristotle: The Highest Good for Man," *Manhood and Politics*
- Giuseppe Cambiano, "Aristotle and the anonymous opponents of slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 8 (1987)
- Javier Martínez, "Slavery and Citizenship in Aristotle's *Politics*," *Filozofia* 68 (2013)

IV. Alfarabi and Islamic Justice

April 10

- Alfarabi, "The Political Regime," excerpts
- Alfarabi, "Plato's Laws," excerpts

April 12

- Muhsin Mahdi, "Introduction," *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*
- Alfarabi, "The Attainment of Happiness" in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Mahdi, pp. 13-25

April 17

- Alfarabi, "The Attainment of Happiness, pp. 25-end

No class April 19 – Student Symposium

April 24

Essay II due

- In-class: writing workshop for final paper

V. Medieval and Renaissance Political Thinking

April 26

- Thomas Aquinas, *De regno*, excerpts

May 1

- Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, excerpts

May 3

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, excerpts

May 8 (*Blog post not required; writing a post will lead to extra credit*)

- Geraldine Heng, “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages,” *Literature Compass* 8 (2011)
- Geraldine Heng, “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race,” *Literature Compass* 8 (2011)

May 11, 10pm: Final paper due