

Brock University
Department of Political Science

2P91: Political Theory I
Fall 2013

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 2:50 p.m.
AS 217

Professor: Stefan Dolgert

Office: Plaza 345

Office Hours: Tuesdays noon – 1 p.m., Wednesdays 1 – 2 p.m., and by appointment

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Teaching Assistants: Geoff Black and Cor Vandermeer

Seminars:

1 Tue. 1500-1600 MCD301 Cor Vandermeer “Athens”

2 Mon. 0800-0900 MCC303 Geoff Black “Sparta”

3 Tue. 1000-1100 TH133 Prof. Dolgert “Persia”

4 Mon. 0900-1000 MCJ209 Geoff Black “Thebes”

5 Tue. 0800-0900 MCC304 Cor Vandermeer “Corinth”

We live in a democracy in a time of war. We are in the twilight of the age of empire, a period where traditional borders are increasingly porous to peoples, goods, and ideas, and where newly emergent nations grapple with the legacies left them by their former imperial masters. This describes our present, but it could as easily describe the world of 5th century BCE Athens, an imperial democracy which fought wars against both the retreating Persian Empire as well as its fellow Greek cities in a bid for regional hegemony. Pericles, the chief Athenian politician of the era, called his city “the School of Hellas,” but he could have as easily said “the School of the Ages”: democracy, trial-by-jury, philosophy, history, medicine, political realism, epic and tragic poetry - all of these we owe in large part to our inheritance from the Athenians. But more than this we have inherited from them a sense of the precariousness of political order - factionalism, class warfare, and foreign conquest loom as ever-present threats that can reduce the peace and prosperity achieved through long struggle into a heap of smoking rubble.

How are we to live in such a time? Are perpetual warfare and radical value pluralism the marks of the “death of God” and the rise of nihilism? Are we facing the end of civilization? This is one view common to us today, but it is not the view of the Greeks. Warfare and strife for them are an ineluctable part of the human condition, for as their sage Heraclitus said: “War is the father of all.” We shall find that all is not familiar to us in the world of the Greeks. Slavery is accepted - indeed it is the economic basis of the city. Blood sacrifice is a common occurrence in daily life, and participation in religious ritual is public rather than private. The notion of a female citizen seems an oxymoron, since to be a part of the political community one must figuratively conquer the feminine

in oneself and in the world. And prior to the Socratic revolution in philosophy there is no distinction between natural science and political philosophy - the order of the cosmos (a redundancy in Greek, since the word "cosmos" means "order") is co-terminal with the order of the political community, and the study of the first is sufficient to provide the answers for the second.

How then are we to approach the Greeks, given both their radical difference from us, as well as their status as the purported founders of the cultural heritage of "the West"? Are they too far away from us to be understood, or are they too close, too familiar for us to gain the necessary critical distance?

We will be asking primarily about the relationship between three terms in this course: virtue, democracy, and the Other. What exactly is virtue - is it limited to the four "cardinal" virtues of the Greeks (courage, wisdom, temperance, justice), or are there others values of ethical significance? And how should we understand the meaning of these terms? We shall see that what appears at first to be fairly simple - say, the definition of courage - is in fact the most obscure of all. We will also ask about the meaning of democracy, and whether there is a special virtue that goes along with it. Finally we will inquire about the relationship of virtue and democracy to the Other. How does our identity, attached to particular conceptions of virtue and the Good, define Otherness? Are certain kinds of Other created by our very idea of virtue, so that "the enemy" is not so much "out there" as it is in our heads? Wars, in particular, are fought against that which is Other to the political community, so in this time of open warfare it behoves us as democratic citizens to grapple with our notions of "us and them" to see if what appears true might instead be as phantasmal as the shadows in Plato's Cave.

Among the other questions that we will address: What is justice? How can it be known and pursued? How is political power generated and exercised? What are the social and ethical prerequisites and consequences of democracy? Must the freedom or fulfillment of some people require the subordination of others? Does freedom require leading (or avoiding) a political life? What does it mean to be "philosophical" or to think "theoretically" about politics? Are epic poems (like the *Iliad*) and the tragedies and comedies of Athens (like the *Oresteia* and *Ecclesiazusae*) also "philosophy"? How is Greek poetry and theatre linked with political thought? Does democracy require tragedy, in a sense, in order to be self-reflective? Finally, we will ask how our contemporary view of politics looks when refracted through the Greek experience of the political - do we understand what we do aright, or are there untapped possibilities to politics that our common sense has overlooked?

We are heirs to the Greeks but also alien to them, and our efforts to "do our thinking for ourselves" will take account of the questions they force us to ask ourselves, without being wedded to the answers that they provide. They do not give us timeless answers because they possess purportedly ageless wisdom, but in using them as interlocutors we gain a valuable resource for self-understanding. For while they too are Other to us, it may be that a political philosophy (and by being in this class you are all junior philosophers) that seeks self-knowledge has the most to gain from a journey through the Other.

Books:

- 1) Homer, *Iliad*, ed. Stanley Lombardo, Hackett Publishing, 978-0872203525
- 2) Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, tr. Ted Hughes
- 3) Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, ed. Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing, 978-0872201682
- 4) Euripides, *Trojan Women*, ed. Alan Shapiro and Peter Burian, Oxford University, 978-0195179101
- 5) Plato, *The Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari, Cambridge University Press, 978-0521484435
- 6) Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. C. D. C. Reeve, Hackett, 978-0872203884
- 7) Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* (online): <https://bacchicstage.wordpress.com/aristophanes/women-in-parliament-2/>
- 8) Plato, *Apology* (online): <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

Class Style:

This class will be conducted as a mixture of lecture and discussion-intensive seminar. This course will also utilize a number of different methods in presenting the materials, including simulations, semi-formal debates, role-play, and short excerpts from contemporary films. Please come prepared to discuss the materials each day, and this means arguing about them in a thoughtful manner with your instructor and fellow classmates. These discussions should be respectful of others' views, but in no way does that suggest that we paper over our differences with others. We will learn from each other precisely to the extent that we can figure out exactly how much we disagree with one another.

Assignments:

Seminar Participation: 20%

Reading Quizzes: 10% (Eleven quizzes, given in lecture. Quizzes will not be announced beforehand, and a missed quiz cannot be made up, though I will drop your lowest score. Midterm: 15% (Given in seminar, Week of October 8-10). The instructor will distribute questions in advance.

Paper: 25% (5 pages, due November 7 in class). The instructor will distribute topics in advance.

Discussion Posts (online in the Forum, via Sakai): 10% (10 postings total, 1% each)

Final Exam: 20% (Date to be determined)

Reading Quizzes:

I believe it is a reasonable expectation that you complete all the readings before we go over them. This will not only help you to understand the class material, it will facilitate class discussions. To this end, I will give 11 reading quizzes throughout the semester and

count your ten highest scores toward your grade. These quizzes will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, though they may include very short open-ended questions. I will not announce these quizzes beforehand. Since I drop your lowest score, I will not allow make-up quizzes. Also please note that your fellow students will grade quizzes in class.

In addition, each seminar has been assigned the name of one of the ancient city-states or empires that fought in the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War (see p. 1). Each seminar's average quiz grade will be computed throughout the semester, and each student in the seminar with the highest average at the end of the term will receive a 1% bonus added to his or her total course grade. One or more quizzes will be conducted in seminar, and you will be given key points about your particularly city/empire that you will need to know for that special quiz. Don't dishonour your city!

Discussion Postings:

Prior to each week of class BEGINNING WITH WEEK TWO, each student is required to post one item to the Forum section of Sakai by Noon on Monday of that week. THERE IS NO POSTING DUE IN WEEK TWELVE. This posting is to be approximately 50-100 words. The grade will be based on whether the posting meets these requirements – it will not be graded for content, though postings that are clearly not related to the week's readings, or that demonstrate a lack of acquaintance with the readings, will not be counted.

Each posting should address a question to the text, or to one of the other student's postings for that week. They can take many forms, and the following are just a few examples: 1) puzzle through what the author means... e.g. "Author X seems to state that Z is the case, but I cannot understand how this argument works, since the Author also says Y. One way to resolve this seeming dilemma is to include B in the argument, which removes the contradiction; 2) argue with the author... "Author M states X and Y, both of which result in a argument that is immoral (state why) and threatens democratic legitimacy (state why). Author M's position is of no use to us in crafting a theory of justice; 3) "Student U has posted that Author P is wrong because of K. While I agree that K is a problem, Student U does not take into account Author P's argument J, which answers the contradictions raised by Student U." Hopefully these dreary examples will give you an idea of the flavour of the postings, but please do make your commentary livelier than what I have just written above! I expect that these postings will facilitate class discussions by placing a number of issues on the table well before the actual class session, and I will likely be responding to some of the issues raised in my lectures/group projects for the week.

Deadline to Withdraw is Wednesday, November 6

Last date for withdrawal without academic penalty and last day to change from credit to audit status for duration 2 courses without academic penalty.

Academic Integrity:

In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build

on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, and share your drafts during peer review and outside of class. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty. However, when you *use* another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signalling it with a standard form of academic citation.

Turnitin.com

Written assignments may be submitted through turnitin.com, at the instructor's discretion. The instructor will supply links and password at the time of the assignment.

Students With Disabilities:

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Centre (4th Floor, Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

Schedule:

WEEK ONE:

September 5: Introductions

Questions: What does Heraclitus mean by "War is the father of all"? Is this a defense of militarism? Does this legitimate any kind of violence? Why do the "best" seek immortal glory? Why does he criticize Homer? Is he an elitist? A democrat? Are these statements "philosophy"?

WEEK TWO:

September 10: Homer, *Iliad*, 1-35

September 12: Homer, *Iliad*, 83-127

Questions: What is this story about? Is there a Homeric "theory of justice"? What is virtue in the *Iliad*? Does the poem have a single hero? What role do the gods play in the narrative, and in Homer's moral psychology? What function is served by the frequency of similes that portray the characters as wild animals or forces of nature? Are these men free? Are they courageous? What role does gender play in this world? What do you make of the opposition between words and deeds? Is there a latent justification for democracy within the text? What kind of young men and women would we raise with this epic used as the primary text of character education? Homer is frequently cited as one of the originators of "the West" - what does this mean? What is the nature of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon? What does it mean to be "best of the Greeks"?

WEEK THREE

September 17: Homer, *Iliad*, 128-179; 233-234

September 19: Homer, *Iliad*, 305-354

Questions: Does Achilles' challenge to the heroic conventions of his culture represent the beginnings of a new ethic, or the boundary beyond which Homer's Greeks cannot imagine? What are the real options available to Achilles? What is the point of the discussion between Glaucus and Sarpedon? Is Achilles at fault for what happens to Patroclus?

WEEK FOUR:

September 24: Homer, *Iliad*, 355-439

September 26: Homer, *Iliad*, 440-492

Questions: What happens to Achilles in the encounter with Hector? Should there be some other way of resolving their conflict? What does Homer's portrayal of Andromache do for our view of the narrative? What is the function of the funeral games of Patroclus? What does Homer show us about the (proper?) resolution of conflict? Is there anything remarkable about Achilles sacrificing the twelve Trojan boys? What do the gods' reactions tell us about Achilles? What is the significance of the meeting between Priam and Achilles? Why does the poem end as it does? Whose side is Homer on?

WEEK FIVE:

October 1: Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Agamemnon*

October 3: Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Libation Bearers (Choephoroi) + Eumenides*

Questions: What is the *Oresteia* about? Does it have a hero? What is the relationship between the polis and the Homeric world? How sympathetic a figure is Clytemnestra? Is Agamemnon murdered or rightfully executed? What do you make of the transformation of the Furies? Is Athena's triumph a satisfying (just?) one? What role does gender play in the trilogy? Is this a patriarchal text plain and simple, or is there a way that the tragedy presents a more textured reconciliation of the masculine and feminine? What does this tell us about the place of juries, and more broadly juridical justice, in the political arena?

WEEK SIX:

October 8: Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, 1-38

October 10: Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, 39-88

Questions: What is the point of the "archaeology" section? What does Thucydides mean when he states that his history is "a possession for all time"? How are the Athenian and Spartan characters contrasted, and isn't such a "cultural" reading of international politics something that we would look down upon if proffered today? What function do the speeches serve in the narrative? What can we say of the speeches and character of Pericles, and is Thucydides making a larger point by juxtaposing the Funeral Oration with his narration of the Plague in Athens? Whose argument do you find more convincing in the Mytilenian Debate - Cleon or Diodotus?

October 15-17: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING/FALL BREAK

WEEK SEVEN:

October 22: Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, 89-154

Questions: Is Thucydides a realist, given the doctrines we see espoused in the Melian Dialogue? How sympathetic are you to the Melians' arguments? How do the invasion of Melos and the Sicilian Expedition fit together? Could Athens have avoided her fate, given the "cultural" reading of politics that Thucydides seems to endorse? What of latter day empires - what are the lessons to be drawn for war and peace from Thucydides? What is Thucydides writing - causal analysis, diplomatic history, tragedy - or something else entirely?

October 24: Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 31-78

Questions: What kind of commentary is Euripides making on the affair at Melos? Is writing such a play in the middle of a war a kind of political treason? What does Euripides show us about the condition of Greek women? Is he a proto-feminist?

WEEK EIGHT:

October 29: Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae*, entire

Questions: What does Aristophanes think about the role of women in politics? Is he recommending that they gain political rights? What large purposes do comedy and satire serve in a democracy? Do they reinforce the status quo, or can they be resources for those critical of the ruling order? Can comedy be revolutionary? Is Aristophanes a proto-feminist? What do we make of a democracy at war that sponsors, at public expense, artists like Aristophanes?

October 31: Plato, *Apology* (online): <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

Questions: Who are Socrates's accusers? What is Socrates's mission? Is he the wisest of the Athenians? Why is he convicted and executed? Should he have been?

WEEK NINE:

November 5: Plato, *Republic*, 1-36

November 7: Plato, *Republic*, 37-110

Questions: Why does Socrates begin the *Republic* in the Piraeus? What is the relationship between democracy and force? Between democracy and ignorance? Are certain forms of knowledge more conducive to political life than others? Does Socrates persuade Thrasymachus? Why does Plato choose Glaucon and Adeimantus as Socrates' prime interlocutors? Do they give him a fair task by demanding that he defend justice without regard for the rewards it might bring? Why is a "noble lie" necessary to the new political order? Can this really be justified by Socrates' own philosophy? What kind of politics is based on such a falsehood?

WEEK TEN:

November 12: Plato, *Republic*, 111-185

November 14: Plato, *Republic*, 186-219

Questions: Does it make sense to think of the self as a composite of the three parts that Socrates describes in the soul? How does this challenge contemporary psychological theories that criticize "repression"? Can psychic harmony ever be achieved? Is Socrates

giving a real defense of the equality of women in Book V, or is this, as Allan Bloom has argued, a gigantic practical joke? How does the training of the young philosopher resemble and differ from the education of the young Jedi, Luke Skywalker? What is the place of anger in both training regimens? How does the relationship between parts of the soul resemble the structure of the surrounding polis?

WEEK ELEVEN:

November 19: Plato, *Republic*, 219-251

November 21: Plato, *Republic*, 252-312

Questions: How much can we regard Plato as a rationalist, given that his description of the Sun in Book VI is unable to provide us with much in the way of actual content? Is Plato really a mystic? What are the implications of the Cave analogy for politics? How would we know if we are the ones in the cave? Are there ways of limiting the hold of “the Cave” on us, if we think of this more as a metaphor for human ignorance than as a specific critique of a particular regime? Is there a good reason for choosing the red pill over the blue pill in *The Matrix*? Is Plato’s theory of regime-change persuasive? What of his defense of the pleasure experienced by the Just Man - is this at all credible? What might make the argument more compelling? How does Plato link democracy with injustice and tyranny? How might we read the argument of the *Republic* differently, given that the text of the dialogue itself would seem to be prohibited by the overt political doctrine that Socrates defends?

WEEK TWELVE:

November 26: Aristotle, *Politics*, 1-64

November 28: Aristotle, *Politics* 65-133

Questions: What does Aristotle mean by saying that “the end” is what we should look to when trying to understand something? What is the significance of calling humans “political animals”? What is the relationship between politics and economics in the polis? How can Aristotle endorse slavery and yet also provide for freeing his slaves upon his death? Does Aristotle give a persuasive defense of private property against Plato’s “communism”?

TWELVE AND A HALF

December 3: Aristotle, *Politics* 134-174

Questions: How can a good citizen not be a good man? Why does Aristotle speak so favourably of kingship? Is Aristotle’s class analysis a recipe for stability or an endorsement of perpetual factionalism and civil war? Why can’t the poor rule a city? Is a true “polity” ever possible? What do you make of Aristotle’s practical advice on how to avoid revolution? Do we live today in a democracy, oligarchy, or something else entirely? Does Aristotle give a convincing argument for democracy?

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, Brock University takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of cheating, such as using crib notes during a test or fabricating data for a lab assignment. The penalties for academic misconduct can be very severe. A grade of zero may be given for the assignment or even for the course, and a second offense may result in suspension from the University. Students are urged to read the section of the Brock University Undergraduate Calendar that pertains to academic misconduct. Students are also reminded that the Student Development Centre (Schmon Tower, Room 400) offers free workshops on writing and study skills and on avoiding plagiarism.

POLICY ON LATE ESSAYS

The policy of the Department is that essays received by the instructor or deposited in the Political Science department Essay box after 4:00 p.m. or at a time designated by the instructor, of the date on which they were due will be penalized **two per cent** for each day late from Monday through Friday and **five per cent** for the period from Friday 4:00 p.m. to Monday 8:30 a.m., and that no paper will be accepted two weeks after the due date.

An essay is considered received when the **original** hard copy (printed-not disk) of the paper is in the hands of the instructor or in the box outside the Political Science Department's office. (ALL ESSAYS MUST INCLUDE A TITLE PAGE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CLEARLY MARKED: STUDENT NUMBER, TA and INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, COURSE NAME and NUMBER).

Having an essay date-stamped by security, or the library, or anyone else does **not** constitute receipt of the essay by the Political Science Department. Instructors may require that essays be submitted electronically through turnitin.com. In this case, students must consult with the Instructor on what constitutes a late essay.

Instructors may establish more restrictive deadlines or more severe penalties in particular courses – check the course outline. Extensions of due dates are granted only in circumstances that are beyond the student's control, such as health problems that are supported by a medical certificate or other, clearly equivalent, situations.

Time management problems are not grounds for extensions. You are strongly urged to avoid these penalties by beginning to work on essays early in the term; by setting your own target dates for completion that are several days before the due date; and by carefully budgeting your time.

POLICY ON RETURNING MARKED ESSAYS

Marked essays will normally be returned during class meetings or at the final examination. Students who are not in class to receive their essays or do not receive them at the final examination can obtain them in two ways:

- ✂ directly from the instructor during his/her office hours (unless the instructor specifies in the course outline or by notice on his/her office door that this option is not available), and/or
- ✂ directly from the instructor on specific days and at specific times announced in class or posted on his/her office door.

Note: Essays that are not picked up within six months after the end of term will be shredded.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please read and sign the following statement, and submit this sheet with your paper. Your paper will not be graded until you have submitted this form.

I, the undersigned, confirm that I understand that all the following constitutes academic misconduct according to Brock University’s policy on academic misconduct, which in turn is consistent with general academic practice:

Quoting someone’s words without using quotation marks.

Quoting someone’s words without acknowledging the source.

Citing someone else’s ideas in my own words but without citing the source.

Using someone else’s organization of ideas.

Allowing someone else the opportunity to borrow material from my paper (e.g., by letting them have access to my paper when they are writing their own paper).

Writing the paper for another student, or doing some of the work for them (such as, but not limited to, reading the articles for them and providing them with notes on the articles).

Allowing someone else (or paying someone else) to write part or all of my paper, or do some of the work for me. The exceptions to this are that it is acceptable to allow someone to type the paper for me or make editorial comment on it. However, if someone types the paper for me, or if I incorporate an editorial suggestion, and there are errors in the typing or the suggestion was misguided, I take full responsibility for those errors.

Submitting this work to another course without both instructors’ permission.

I confirm that I have not done any of the above forms of academic misconduct.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____