

Political Science 4812 -- Ethics & Politics

Professor Darrell Dobbs http://www.marquette.edu/polisci/faculty_dobbs.shtml
Office Hours: 1:00-4:00 pm TH
421 Wm. Wehr Physics

Marquette University
Class times: 9:30-10:45 T TH
418 Wm. Wehr Physics

Course Rationale

The seventeenth-century political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, surmised that human life in a lawless condition of anarchy would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” In this assessment, he agrees with his great predecessor, Aristotle, who also held that political communities are instituted to escape this condition and to secure for citizens a better life. But what good, or combination of goods, is the decisive measure of “better” in human life? Is the human good to be found chiefly in enjoying pleasure, in winning honor, or in contemplating truth? Are virtues such as courage, temperance, generosity, magnanimity and justice indispensable to a good life? If so, how are such virtues to be fostered? Because these questions arise directly from one’s consideration of the very *raison d’être* of the political community, no attentive student of politics can afford to ignore them. Nevertheless, contemporary social science denies, as a matter of methodological principle, that such questions can be rationally decided. We must therefore look elsewhere, to the great political philosophers of the past, for a reasoned discussion of the relationship between ethics and politics. By participating in this discussion we may hope to develop our own capacities for good judgment and responsible citizenship.

Requirements, Expectations and Grading

You are expected to attend every meeting of this class, arriving on time and having carefully read the assigned texts. Throughout the term you will be asked to prepare summaries, formulate questions, and produce explanations concerning points of interest you encounter in the required reading. There will be a midterm examination and a final project or examination. Your summaries, questions, and answers will together determine 40%, the midterm examination 30%, and the final project or examination 30% of your final grade. Absences may be excused at your instructor’s discretion upon receipt of your written request via date-stamped email prior to class time of the day of your absence. Your second, and every subsequent, *unexcused* absence will lower your final grade by one step: e.g., B ---> BC.

Date	Assigned Reading
Week 1	Introductions; Martin Diamond, “Ethics and Politics: The American Way”
Weeks 2-6	Plato, <i>Meno</i> 70a1-73d2; 73d2-76a9; 76a9-79a2; 79a3-80b8; 80b9-84d2; 84d3-86c7; 86c7-90b4; 90b4-95a1; 95a1-98b6; 98b7-100c2
Week 7	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs.6-7, 12-14; chs.15-21
Weeks 8-9	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> Book 1 chs.1-2, Book 3 ch.9, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 10 ch.6-9; Fall Break ; Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> Book 1 chs.3-7; chs.8-13
Weeks 10-12	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 1 chs.1-3; chs.4, 5, 7, 8; chs.9-13; Book 2 chs.1-4; chs.5-9; Book 3 chs.1-5
Week 13	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 4 chs.3-9; Thanksgiving
Weeks 14-15	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 5 chs.1-6; Book 5 chs.7-11; Book 7 chs.11-14; Book X chs.1-5