Citizen, Stranger, Statesman, Tyrant

Sem 002, Class #63918
MW 4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.
Honors College 155

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“The past remains integral to us all, individually and collectively. We must concede the ancients their place… But their place is not simply back there in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present.”

~David Lowenthal

Course Description:

We are living in the midst of a turbulent and troubling political landscape. Among the many problems the American political community faces are conflicts over divisions of class, race, and gender; questions over who our leaders should be and how they should exercise power; debates over who should be recognized as legitimate citizens and how we should deal with those we deem to be outsiders; and finally, concerns about how we cope with dissenting opinions from those who raise meaningful but unsettling questions about our community’s shortcomings.

At the end of the 5th century and beginning of the 4th century BCE, the ancient Athenians experienced an even more tempestuous political moment. Once a leading political, economic, and cultural power in the ancient Mediterranean world, Athens was defeated by Sparta during the Peloponnesian War, and all aspects of the city’s way of life were called into question in the aftermath. In the midst of this turmoil, thinkers like Socrates, Aristophanes, Plato, and Aristotle wrestled with questions similar to those we face today. How should one distinguish between a legitimate form of government and one that has become corrupt? Who should exercise power and why? How might one differentiate a just leader from a tyrant? What do healthy and robust governing institutions look like? What kinds of reforms are most effective in addressing problems of internal division? What role might individual citizens and strangers play in bringing about positive change?

In this course, we will examine some of the most influential political and philosophical texts written by Aristophanes, Plato, and Aristotle, with an eye to gaining greater understanding of contemporary political debates by comparing and contrasting our own political commitments and practices to those of these ancient Athenians.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to help students achieve the following goals:

- To develop greater familiarity with the central themes, principles, and questions of ancient Greek political philosophy by studying a select set of texts written by Aristophanes, Plato, and Aristotle. We will also examine similarities to and differences from contemporary American political thought and practice.
• To cultivate and hone reading skills in order to examine difficult texts with care. Rather than simply skimming the readings, students will actively engage with them by critically analyzing the ideas they contain, by posing meaningful questions, and by considering the context in which they were written.

• To exercise creativity by developing original and insightful interpretations of each text. Students will strive to express these interpretations clearly and eloquently in both written and spoken form. Students will seek to support their interpretations with textual evidence and robust arguments.

• To improve students’ communication skills in the classroom in ways that can be transferred to political conversations outside the classroom. Students will be encouraged to listen respectfully to diverse opinions, to seek genuine understanding of the positions taken by those on different sides of the ideological spectrum, and to express their own opinions in ways that foster healthy political discourse. Students will also strive to become more proficient at participating in group discussions, as well as leading them.

• To progress towards the ultimate telos of a liberal arts education by critically examining their own opinions and assumptions about political philosophy, while opening themselves to the possibility of new and different perspectives that can be put into practice in their daily lives as members of a larger community.

Texts:


Additional readings will be available through D2L. Specific reading assignments will be given via reading schedules that will be distributed throughout the semester.

All readings must be completed prior to the time they will be discussed in class. These are difficult and dense texts, so please allow enough time to read all assignments thoroughly. Students should take notes to record their questions and comments about these readings. It is my expectation that students will always be prepared to actively engage in class discussions, and that they will *always bring the assigned text to class*. 
Evaluation:

25% Class Participation
15% Essay #1
15% Essay #2
10% Student-led Discussion
35% Paper

Class participation:
Political philosophy is a collaborative activity that requires meaningful dialogue with others. Therefore, participation is an extremely important component of this course and counts for 25% of your total grade. This grade is based on the following elements:

- The quantity and quality of your daily engagement and contributions in class, especially your participation when your classmates are leading the discussion.

- Your evaluations of discussions led by your classmates. It is my expectation that you will offer your classmates substantive feedback and meaningful scores on peer evaluation forms.

- Throughout the semester, I will ask students to write questions (and provide answers) on specific readings, and we will use them to structure our class discussions. These question and answer assignments will be noted in the reading schedule, and it is each student’s responsibility to keep track of when they are due.

- I will occasionally ask students to complete short written assignments, including writing brief summaries of the assigned readings (or portions of the assigned readings). All written assignments must be the student’s own original work and should reflect the student’s own explanation/analysis of the primary texts (for example, student summaries should not simply repeat or paraphrase the summaries offered in SparkNotes or other study guides). Again, these assignments will be noted in the reading schedule, and it is each student’s responsibility to keep track of when they are due.

Students may miss two discussion question/answer or short written assignments (including summaries) during the course of the semester without penalty, but beginning with the third missing assignment, the overall participation grade for the semester will be lowered a partial letter grade for each missing assignment (ex. A → A-).

Short Essays:
There will be two short essays this semester. Each counts for 15% of your final grade. The tentative dates for these essays are: March 3rd and April 7th. For the first essay, students will respond to a prompt asking them to examine a central theme or issue in the Clouds, Apology, and Republic. The

1 Directions for question/answer assignments: Students should upload their questions and answers (as a Word document) to the appropriate drop box in D2L by 6:00 p.m. on the day before we are scheduled to discuss the assigned reading, in addition to uploading the question to the appropriate OneDrive document (failure to meet this deadline will result in a lowering of one’s grade for that assignment). All questions/answer files uploaded to D2L must contain a header with your name, the date the question is due, and the text on which you are writing. These assignments will be graded on a check minus/check/check plus scale.
second essay will ask students to examine a central theme in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Additional information about these essays will be distributed in class as the semester progresses.

**Leading large group discussions:**
Each student is required to lead two class discussions this semester (opportunities to sign-up for these sessions will be offered in class when each new reading schedule is distributed). This assignment entails the following:

- Prepare a written summary of your assigned section of the reading in which you highlight each of the central ideas/concepts/themes, provide any background information that you think may be helpful in understanding the context, and offer some original analysis that might stimulate discussion. Students are not expected to consult secondary sources as part of this assignment, but may do so if they wish (such as a book chapter or an article from a peer-reviewed journal or peer-reviewed internet source [no Wikipedia, blogs, etc.]). If secondary sources are used, they must be properly cited. This summary should be about a page in length.

- Prepare a list of at least six discussion questions on the assigned reading that you will use as the basis for a conversation about the assigned text. Although I recommend starting off with some basic questions to get the discussion going, you should also strive to include more challenging questions that demonstrate originality and sophistication.

- **One day prior** to your assigned session, please upload your summary and your list of discussion questions to the appropriate D2L drop box by **6:00 p.m.** on that day.²

- On the day of your discussion, you should present your summary to the class. **This presentation should last no longer than five to seven minutes,** and it may take any form you wish. You may use PowerPoint, create a graphic representation of your analysis (such as a diagram or other drawing), etc.

- After presenting your summary, you will lead the discussion of the reading based on the questions you submitted. Although I don’t require that you distribute hard copies of your questions, I highly recommend doing so. As you lead the discussion, it is my expectation that you will interact with your discussants by responding to their comments with feedback, asking secondary questions, and fielding any of the questions they ask.

- This discussion (including the presentation of your summary) should last for **thirty-five minutes.** It is your responsibility to fill the entire time allotted for your discussion. Although I only require that you write six discussion questions, I recommend thinking of additional questions in case the class doesn’t respond well to your original questions.

**Your grade for this assignment will be based on:**
- whether or not you met the minimum requirements of the assignment (you submitted a written summary in advance, you submitted at least six discussion questions in advance, you presented

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² Students who upload their questions and summary after 6:00 p.m. but before 11:59 p.m. on the day before their discussion will be penalized a partial-letter grade for this assignment (ex. A→A-). Students who upload between midnight and the time our class begins will be penalized a full letter grade (ex. A→B). Students who are absent on the day of their discussion session will receive a zero for the assignment. No make-ups.
your summary to the class effectively, your discussion met the time requirements stated above, etc.)

- the quality of your summary and the skill with which you present it
- the quality of your discussion questions
- the skill with which facilitate discussion
- the evaluations of your classmates

**Paper:**
Every student will be required to write one paper (of approximately 10-12 pages) that articulates and defends an argument focused on some aspect of the relationship between Plato’s and Aristotle’s political philosophies. This paper will be developed in multiple stages, consisting of four separate, staggered assignments (altogether, these assignments will constitute 35% of your total grade for this course). These assignments include:

- A topic statement and exploratory lit review (counts for 5% of your grade total for this course)
- An argument statement, evidence outline, and refined lit review (also 5%)
- A rough draft for peer review and participation in small writing group (also 5%)
- The final paper draft (counts for 20% of your grade for this course)

The details of this assignment will be discussed further as the semester progresses, and students will receive a detailed handout explaining each part of the aforementioned assignments. The final draft of this paper will be due on the last day of class. Late papers will be downgraded for each additional day they are late.

**University Policies:**
A statement of university policies that pertain to this course’s participants can be found at: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf)

**Disabilities:**
If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please give the professor a copy of your student visa at the beginning of the semester. Accommodations are not retroactive.

**Class Attendance Policy:**
I care about whether or not you attend this class, and I notice when you are missing. I expect you to arrive on time and to be prepared to participate every time we meet. Attendance will be taken each class period by means of a written roster circulated at the beginning of class. If you miss the opportunity to sign the attendance roster due to tardiness, you will be counted as absent for that day. Students should keep track of their own absences since I do not calculate these totals until the end of the semester. Students with excessive absences will suffer a grade penalty. Specifically, after the second absence, your final grade will be lowered by a partial letter grade for each additional absence (i.e., for the third absence, an A will be lowered to an A-, for the fourth absence an A- will be lowered to an B+, etc.). Students who are absent on the day of their discussion session will receive a zero for the assignment. There will not be opportunities for make-ups. Absentee students are responsible for learning future assignments and readings.
Additional Assistance:
If you are struggling in this course for any reason, please feel free to send me an email or come and speak with me during office hours so that we can address your needs as soon as possible. In addition, UWM has a variety of resources available to help you have a successful semester. More information about these resources is available from your Honors advisor, Panther Academic Support Services (http://uwm.edu/pass/), and the Writing Center (http://uwm.edu/writing-center/).

Academic misconduct and dishonesty:
Academic misconduct and dishonesty are serious offenses. Such actions violate the trust that forms the foundation of the student-teacher relationship, they interfere with student learning, and they undermine the reputation of the University as a whole. In particular, plagiarism is a violation of the academic honor code and carries severe sanctions. The University's policy regarding these matters is available here: http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academicmisconduct/. Any assignments or exams that violate this policy will receive a failing grade, and further penalties may be applied, including failing this course or even suspension or dismissal from the University.

Technology in our Classroom:
In order to foster a classroom environment that is conducive to meaningful dialogue, I ask that you please use technology appropriately during our class meetings. Turn off all cell or smart phones, iPhones, iPods, or any other devices that may distract you, your classmates, or your professor. You may use a laptop or e-reader to take notes or to view readings online, but please be thoughtful about how you make use of these devices. In my experience, computers often prevent students from fully engaging in classroom discussions. Students who surf the web during class, check their email, or engage in other online activities that are unrelated to classroom activities should expect that this kind of behavior will have a negative impact on participation grades. Texting during our classroom meetings will result in the automatic loss of participation points. I will not interrupt our class proceedings to notify you that I am imposing this penalty. If a student chooses to text in class, she/he may just assume that the points have been subtracted.

Course Schedule:
Note: the schedule below is tentative since some topics may require more or less time than anticipated. Reading schedules with specific assignments will be distributed throughout the semester.

<p>| Week 1 | Course introduction and Aristophanes’ Clouds |
| Week 2 | Plato’s Apology and Republic |
| Week 3 | Plato’s Republic |
| Week 4 | Plato’s Republic and essay #1 prompt distributed |
| Week 5 | Plato’s Republic |
| Week 6 | Plato’s Republic and essay #1 due |
| Week 7 | Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics |
| Week 8 | Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics essay #2 prompt distributed |
| Week 9 | Spring break |
| Week 10 | Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and Politics |
| Week 11 | Aristotle’s Politics and essay #2 due |
| Week 12 | Aristotle’s Politics |
| Week 13 | Aristotle’s Politics |
| Week 14 | Aristotle’s Politics |
| Week 15 | Aristotle’s Politics |
| Week 16 | Course wrap-up and final paper due |</p>
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