CLASSICS 0084: GREEK POLITICAL THOUGHT

Syllabus

Class Meetings - EATN 202
Tuesday 9:30-10:20 am
Wednesday 9:30-10:20 am
Friday 9:30-10:20 am

Course Instructor
Monica Berti
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Office Hours
Wednesday 10:30-1:00; or by appointment
Eaton 329

Textbook
RYAN K. BALOT, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006) ISBN 1-4051-0030-3 (paperback)

Other Readings and Texts
Other readings and texts listed in the syllabus will be given to the students during classes and posted on the course Trunk site (https://trunk.tufts.edu).

Course Description

The modern term ‘politics’ comes from the Greek politikos (of, or pertaining to, citizens and the city) and the reflection about political life and constitutional forms is one of the most important contributions of ancient Greece. The aim of this course is to explore origin and development of Greek political thought because it is essential for our understanding of contemporary world, especially when we discuss themes such as democracy, equality, justice, and the confrontation between East and West. The course will be a survey of Greek thought in English translation from Archaic times to the Hellenistic age. Students will also have the opportunity to learn Greek words of the political language by searching new digital tools available through the Perseus Digital Library (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/), in order to understand the etymology of much of our political terminology. Homeric epics, Hesiod, and the lyric poets reveal the first political reflection that testifies the change from the world of the kings to the new role of the aristocracy and the emerging needs of oppressed people. The search for justice and new solutions to civic coexistence permeate the poetry of Solon and the action of archaic lawgivers. In the Fifth and Fourth century we have the great explosion of the democratic political thinking and the debate about Athenian imperialism, which are expressed by many different media, as the Greek drama, the works of the great historians Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, orators’ speeches, and Sophists’ arguing about ethics, politics, and the relationship between law and nature. The discussion about the meaning of ‘law’, the relationship between the citizen and the city, and the teaching of virtue strongly emerge in the trial of Socrates and in the reconstruction of his personality by Plato, who speculate on philosopher rulers, justice, the good city, and practical politics in the Republic and the Laws. Aristotle is the first political scientist and his natural philosophy greatly influences his ideas about household, slavery, justice, and the distribution of power in the city, together with his classification of constitutions and theories about their evolution and change. With Alexander the Great and the end of Greek cities' freedom we enter a new age where individual needs and a different way of conceiving politics are expressed by Cynics, Stoics, and the Epicureans, while Hellenistic theories concerning kingship develop a new conception of rulership before Greece is conquered by Rome.
Course Requirements and Expectations

- Preparation for attendance and participation in seminar discussions.
- Assigned Readings: to be read before class.
- Assigned Texts: to be read and discussed in class with the instructor.
- Written assignments: weekly journaling exercises of roughly two pages double-spaced that engage critically with the Texts read and discussed in class during the week. A printed copy of the journal is due on Tuesday before class.
- Research Project: abstract of 1-2 pages double-spaced with preliminary bibliography (March 13) that results in a Paper of 8-10 pages (April 27). The aim of the Research Paper is to analyze topics treated in class focusing on the terminology of Greek political thought. Students are expected to use search tools available through the Perseus Digital Library to find words of the political language in Classical sources. N.B. Written assignments that are submitted late will be penalized one-half letter grade per day late.

Examinations

- Midterm Examination (Wednesday, March 7).
- Final Examination (Tuesday, May 8).

Topics and Reading Assignments

WEEK ONE

1. Introduction to the course
FRIDAY, JANUARY 20
Reading: R.K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 1-15 (Chapter 1. Introduction: How to Do Greek Political Thought)

WEEK TWO

2. Justice in Homer
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24
Text: Homer, *Iliad* 18.478-607

3. Justice in Hesiod
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

4. Archaic Lawgivers
FRIDAY, JANUARY 27
Texts: Plutarch, *The Life of Lycurgus* 1, 4-6
WEEK THREE

5. Archaic Sparta
TUESDAY, JANUARY 31
Text: Xenophon, *The Spartan Constitution* 2-4

6. Archaic Athens
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1
Text: Plutarch, *The Life of Solon* 13-16

7. Democracy at Athens
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3
Text: Herodotus 3.80-82

WEEK FOUR

8. Democracy and Freedom
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7
Reading: R.K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 57-63 (Democratic Conceptions of Freedom)
Text: Thucydides 2.35-46

9. Democracy and Deliberation
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
Reading: R.K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 63-68 (Democratic Deliberation)
Texts: Plutarch, *The Life of Aristides* 7; Pseudo-Andocides, *Against Alcibiades* 2-6

10. Democracy and Leadership
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

WEEK FIVE

11. Democratic Political Thought
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14
Texts: Diodorus of Sicily 11.86.4-87.6; Plato, *Protagoras* 320d-328d

12. Democracy and War
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15
Texts: Thucydides 1.23, 3.82-84
13. Democracy and Tragedy
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17
(1. The Institution of the Theatre. 2. Political Themes of Tragic Writing. 3. The Oresteia)
Text: Aeschylus, Eumenides 443-753

WEEK SIX
14. Criticizing Athenian Democracy
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21
Text: The ‘Old Oligarch’ (Constitution of the Athenians) 1

15. Law, Nature, and Athenian Imperialism
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22
Text: Thucydides 5.84-116

16. Socrates and the Laws
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24
Text: Plato, Crito 49e-54d

WEEK SEVEN
17. Socrates and Athens
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 131-137 (Socrates and Athens)
Text: Plato, Apology 28a-34b

18. Imperialism in Fifth-Century Greece
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 29
Text: Thucydides 1.68-88

19. Greeks vs. Persians
FRIDAY, MARCH 2
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 146-156 (Monarchic Imperialism. Natural Superiority?)
Texts: Xenophon, Cyropaedia 1.1.1-5, 8.8
WEEK EIGHT

20. The Debate on Athenian Imperialism
TUESDAY, MARCH 6
Texts: Lysias, *Funeral Oration* 17-57

21. MIDTERM EXAMINATION - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7

22. Democracy and Imperialism
FRIDAY, MARCH 9
Reading: R.K. BALOT, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 170-176 ( Final Thoughts)
Text: Isocrates, *On the Peace* 95-135

WEEK NINE

23. Isocrates and the Democracy of the Fathers
TUESDAY, MARCH 13
Text: Isocrates, *Areopagitica* 20-55

24. Xenophon’s *Agesilaos* and the Monarchic Ideal
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14
Text: Xenophon, *Agesilaos* 5-8

25. Plato’s Cave and Contemporary Politics
FRIDAY, MARCH 16
Text: Plato, *Republic* 7.514a-520a

WEEK TEN

26. Plato’s *Gorgias* and the Superiority of Philosophy to Politics
TUESDAY, MARCH 27
Reading: R.K. BALOT, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 191-197 (Plato on Rhetoric and Order in the *Gorgias*)
Text: Plato, *Gorgias* 506c-523a

27. The Ideal City of Plato
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

28. Philosopher Kings as Rulers
FRIDAY, MARCH 30
Text: Plato, *Republic* 6.484a-502b
WEEK ELEVEN

29. Plato’s Political Philosophy in the Statesman and the Laws
TUESDAY, APRIL 3
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 210-226 (Platonic Political Philosophy after the Republic)
Texts: Plato, Statesman 287b-305e; Laws 12.960b-969d

30. Aristotle and the Analysis of Constitutions
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 227-230 (Chapter 7. Aristotle’s Political Thought)
Texts: Aristotle, Politics 4.1288b.9-1290a.29; Constitution of the Athenians 41

31. Aristotle and the Observation of Constitutional Changes
FRIDAY, APRIL 6
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 230-234 (Civic Conflict, Emotion, and Injustice: Observing the Polis as It Is)
Text: Aristotle, Politics 5.1301a.19-1304b.19

WEEK TWELVE

32. Naturalism and Slavery in Aristotle
TUESDAY, APRIL 10
Text: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1.1094a.1-1094b.11; Politics 1.1252a.1-1255b.40

33. Citizens and Citizenship in Aristotle
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 245-254 (Polis and Citizenship in General. Aristotle’s Best Polis)

34. Political Justice and Good Government in Aristotle
FRIDAY, APRIL 13
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 255-257 (Political Possibilities in Existing Cities)
Texts: Aristotle, Politics 4.1293b.22-1294b.43, 4.1295a.25-1296b.13

WEEK THIRTEEN

35. Aristotle and the Classification of Constitutions
TUESDAY, APRIL 17
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 257-261 (The Best Constitution in Relation to Existing Conditions. Classification of Constitutions)
Text: Aristotle, Politics 3.1278b.6-1281a.11

36. Aristotle and the Masses
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 261-265 (The Power of the Masses. Conclusion)
Text: Aristotle, Politics 3.1281a.12-1283a.22
37. Political Thought in the Hellenistic Age  
FRIDAY, APRIL 20  
Reading: R.K. BALOT, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 266-269 (Chapter 8. Hellenistic Political Thought)  
Texts: Diodorus of Sicily 17.117; Pseudo-Aristotle, Rhetoric to Alexander 1420a.6-1421b.7  

WEEK FOURTEEN  

38. The Theory of Kingship  
TUESDAY, APRIL 24  
Reading: R.K. BALOT, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 269-280 (Theory of Kingship. The Traditional Schools)  
Texts: Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates 9-11, 184-202  

39. Cynicism, Stoics, and Epicureans  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25  
Texts: Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers 6.21-38, 7.110-126, 10.117-121a, 10.139-154  

40. Graecia capta: Greek Thought and Roman Conquests  
FRIDAY, APRIL 27  
Texts: Polybius, Histories 6.3-4, 6.11-14  

FINAL EXAMINATION - Tuesday, May 8 - 12:00-2:00 pm