CLASSICS 0084: GREEK POLITICAL THOUGHT

Syllabus

Class Meetings - ANDN 309
Tuesday 10:30-11:45 am
Thursday: 10:30-11:45 am

Course Instructor
Monica Berti
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Office Hours
Tuesday 12:00-3:00 pm; or by appointment
Eaton 326

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 speculates 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 7) that results in a Paper of 8-10 pages (April 18). 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 (Tuesday, March 12).
• Final Examination (Thursday, April 25).

Topics and Reading Assignments

WEEK ONE

1. Introduction to the Course
THURSDAY, JANUARY 17
Reading: R.K. BALOT, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 1-15 (Chapter 1. Introduction: How to Do Greek Political Thought)
Text: Aristotle, Politics 1.1252a.24-1253a.29

WEEK TWO

2. Justice in Homer and Hesiod
TUESDAY, JANUARY 22

3. Archaic Lawgivers and Archaic Sparta
THURSDAY, JANUARY 24
Texts: Plutarch, The Life of Lycurgus 1, 4-6; Xenophon, The Spartan Constitution 2-4

WEEK THREE

4. Democracy at Athens
TUESDAY, JANUARY 29
Texts: Plutarch, The Life of Solon 13-16; Herodotus 3.80-82
5. Democracy and Freedom
THURSDAY, JANUARY 31
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 57-63 (Democratic Conceptions of Freedom)
Text: Thucydides 2.35-46

WEEK FOUR

6. Democracy and Deliberation
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5
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

7. Democracy and Leadership
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7
Reading: R.K. Balot, Greek Political Thought, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 68-73 (Courage, Trust, and Leadership)

WEEK FIVE

8. Democratic Political Thought
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12
Texts: Diodorus of Sicily 11.86.4-87.6; Plato, Protagoras 320d-328d

9. Democracy and Tragedy
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14
Text: Aeschylus, Eumenides 443-753

WEEK SIX

10. Criticizing Athenian Democracy
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19
Texts: Thucydides 1.23, 3.82-84; The ‘Old Oligarch’ (Constitution of the Athenians) 1

11. Law, Nature, and Athenian Imperialism
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21
Text: Thucydides 5.84-116
WEEK SEVEN

12. Socrates and Athens
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26
Texts: Plato, *Crito* 49e-54d; Plato, *Apology* 28a-34b

13. Imperialism in Fifth-Century Greece
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28
Texts: Thucydides 1.68-88; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.1.1-5, 8.8

WEEK EIGHT

14. The Debate on Athenian Imperialism and the Democracy of the Fathers
TUESDAY, MARCH 5

15. Plato and the Superiority of Philosophy to Politics
THURSDAY, MARCH 7
Texts: Plato, *Republic* 7.514a-520a; Plato, *Gorgias* 506c-523a

WEEK NINE

16. MIDTERM EXAMINATION - TUESDAY, MARCH 12

WEEK TEN

18. Plato’s Political Philosophy in the *Statesman* and the *Laws*
TUESDAY, MARCH 26
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

19. Aristotle and the Analysis of Constitutions
THURSDAY, MARCH 28
WEEK ELEVEN

20. Naturalism and Slavery in Aristotle
TUESDAY, APRIL 2
Reading: R.K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing (Malden, MA 2006), pp. 234-245

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

WEEK TWELVE

22. Aristotle and the Classification of Constitutions
TUESDAY, APRIL 9
Text: Aristotle, *Politics* 3.1278b.6-1281a.11

23. Aristotle and the Masses
THURSDAY, APRIL 11

WEEK THIRTEEN

24. Political Thought in the Hellenistic Age
TUESDAY, APRIL 16
Texts: Diodorus of Sicily 17.117; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Rhetoric to Alexander* 1420a.6-1421b.7; *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* 9-11, 184-202

25. Cynicism, Stoics, and Epicureans
THURSDAY, APRIL 18

WEEK FOURTEEN

26. Graecia capta: Greek Thought and Roman Conquests
TUESDAY, APRIL 23
Texts: Polybius, *Histories* 6.3-4, 6.11-14

27. FINAL EXAMINATION - THURSDAY, APRIL 25