

FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY GREEK AND ROMAN POLITICAL THOUGHT Fall 2016

Instructor: *Giovanni Giorgini*

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Lectures: Monday/Wednesday 10:10-11:25 am

Course description

The course examines the historical and theoretical foundations of democracy. The underlying assumption is that political arrangements and institutions are the embodiment of political ideas and theories. The course will investigate the historical emergence of democracy as a form of government based on equality before the law and equal access to all citizens to the deliberative, decisional and control processes. The historical starting point is identified in Solon's reforms in Athens which dramatically broke the hegemony of ancient nobility; we will then study Cleisthenes' reforms and their redefinition of citizenry; in the context of the new political ideal of *isonomia*. We will proceed to examine the theoretical debate of the fifth century BCE, which includes Herodotus (III, 80-82), Thucydides and Protagoras. We will then examine the criticism levelled at democracy by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle: their thought enables us to compare the ancient idea of democracy to our own. Finally, we will study the Roman contribution to the theory of democracy, namely Cicero's ideal of 'republic' and the role that *ius*, codified law, played in it.

Required readings:

Solon, *Poems*, Loeb Edition.

Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. C. Dewald and R. Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); ISBN-10: 0199535663.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. P.J. Rhodes and M. Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); ISBN-10: 0140440399.

Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. C.C.W. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); ISBN-10: 0199555656.

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. C. Rowe (London: Penguin, 2012); ISBN-10: 0141442433.

Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. M.J. Levett, ed. M. Burnyeat (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992); ISBN-10: 0872201589.

Aristotle's *Politics*, trans. C. Lord (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013; 2nd edition); ISBN-10: 0226921840.

Cicero, *The Republic and The Laws*, trans. N. Rudd and ed. J. Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN-10: 019954011X.

Classes

September 12: Introduction: what is democracy? The historical background to the emergence of democracy. The role of tyranny in the establishment of democracy.

- September 14: Solon and his reforms: their meaning and importance. Reading: Solon's *Poems*.
- September 19: Cleisthenes' reforms and the birth of *isonomia*. Reading: Herodotus I, 59-65.
- September 21: Herodotus III, 80-82: the debate on the best form of government.
- September 26: Herodotus as defender of Pericles' democratic regime. Reading: Herodotus V, 55-77.
- September 28: The origin of democratic theory: Pericles' funeral speech and Protagoras. Reading: Thuc. II, 36-43.
- October 3: Thucydides: democracy and imperialism. Reading: Thuc. V, 89-108.
- October 5: Thucydides: the two meanings of democracy. Debate.
- October 12: Protagoras in Plato's *Theaetetus*. Reading: Plato, *Theaetetus* 165a-168c.
- October 17: The apology of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. Reading: Plato, *Theaetetus* 165a-168c (**First paper due in class or by email**).
- October 19: Plato and Protagoras: a long-standing confrontation. Reading: Plato, *Protagoras* 323c-329c (The Great Myth).
- October 24: Plato, *The Republic*: the creation of the perfect city and the historical experience. Reading: *Republic* Books 1-2.
- October 26: Plato: the decline of the perfect city and the forms of government. Reading: *Republic* Book 8.
- October 31: Plato: why the perfect city is not democratic. Reading: *Republic* Book 9.
- November 2: Plato: Athenian democracy as a bad form of government that works. The Old Oligarch.
- November 7: Aristotle: the notion of polis as community and its origin. Reading: *Politics* book 1. (**Second paper due in class or by email**).
- November 9: Aristotle on political regimes: theory and practice. Reading: *Politics* book 2.
- November 14: Aristotle's criticism of democracy in the context of his theory of political regimes. Reading: *Politics* book 5.
- November 16: Aristotle: the best form of government. Reading: *Politics* book 8.
- November 21: Cicero: the definition of *respublica*. Its origin and purpose. Reading: *De republica* book 1.
- November 28: Cicero: the theory of political regimes. Reading: *De republica* book 1.
- November 30: Cicero: the role of the laws. Reading: *De legibus*.
- December 5: Cicero: the best form of government and the ideal republic. Reading: *De legibus*.
- December 7: Review session. (**Third paper due in class or by email**).

Course evaluation.

Graduate students: **One Final Paper**. The topic of the paper is free provided it relates to the topics of the course

Undergraduate students: **3 Papers** (1st paper due: October 6; 2nd paper due: November 10; 3^d paper due: December 8), 1200-1500 words (5-6 pages) each.