

**POLS 290 The History of Political Thought I, CRN: 32064****Meeting Times: Fall 2015, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30pm-1:45pm****Location: BSB-1171****Instructor: Aviral Pathak****Office: BSB-1170A****Office Hours: 2pm-3pm Tuesday and Thursday, and by appointment.****Email: [apatha5@uic.edu](mailto:apatha5@uic.edu)**

**Course Description:** What are the ancient foundations of our politics? What sort of life do the ancients prescribe, both for individuals and for the community? What does this life mean in terms of democracy, freedom, justice, and equality; terms so familiar to us moderns? How did ancient politics mediate the space between the individual and the larger community that the individual is a part of? What do the ancients tell us about the conditions that not only make democracy possible but also lead to its demise? These and similar questions will guide our encounter with the ancients this semester. Consequently, we will engage with some of the most vital features in ancient political thought, such as, virtue, duty, power, government, privacy, the public. These questions and features have occupied modern minds as well. And so, our historical and textual investigation of the ancients will allow us to better grasp ancient life and politics, and their connections to our modern life and politics.

**Student Requirements:** This course will be largely structured around textual reading, in-class lectures and discussions. Students are expected to have completed all the assigned readings before class meets, in order to be prepared for the lectures and the discussions for the week. Taking notes during class time is encouraged. Using electronic devices in class for purposes other than note-taking is strongly discouraged. Students are also expected to participate during class time. Participation not only facilitates a lively discussion, but will also allow students to work on clearly presenting their questions and thoughts to others, and on respectfully engaging with others. All students are expected to conduct themselves within the guidelines issued by the university (which can be found here: <http://catalog.uic.edu/ucat/>).

**Attendance is required.** The readings for this class can, on occasion, be challenging. Regular attendance is one of the most effective ways in which students can more fully come to terms with the materials and themes in the readings. This pays

dividends when time comes to prepare for the exams. So, it should be noted that a student's grade will be lowered after two unexcused absences. However, exceptions can be made. Students must provide relevant documentation (such as a doctor's note) to excuse themselves from class. Students must also notify the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester about any specific days of religious observance for which they will be absent from class.

Students with disabilities, requiring accommodations for access and participation in this course, must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (<http://drc.uic.edu>). Please call (312) 413-2183 (voice) or (312) 413-0123 (TTY) for more information.

**Grading Policy:** Grades will be distributed accordingly:

participation:	10%
three in-class exams:	30%, each

Note: All exams will be open-book. The first two exams will be held in-class, during class time. The third exam will be held Friday, December 11 (8-9am) at a location TBD, during finals week. The third exam will not be cumulative.

**Required Readings:** The materials for this class will include the following required texts.

- Aeschylus, *Oresteia* (Oxford University Press, Translated by Christopher Collard)
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Hackett Publishing, Translated by Steven Lattimore)
- Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (Signet Classics, Translated by Douglas Parker)
- Plato, *The Republic* (Penguin Books, Translated by Desmond Lee)
- Aristotle, *Politics* (Dover Publications, Translated by Benjamin Jowett)
- Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire* (Penguin Books, Translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert)
- Cicero, *On Duties* (Cambridge University Press, Edited by Griffin and Atkins)
- Tacitus, *Empire and Emperors: Selections from Tacitus' Annals* (Cambridge University Press, Translated by Graham Tingay)

These books are available for order at the UIC bookstore. These texts can also be purchased through on-line retailers, or requested (at no cost) from the library. If you

opt for the Internet or the library, I encourage you to pay special attention to the publisher and translator of each text. If you already have an edition by another publisher or translator, you are welcome to use it. Just be sure to match your reading to the class using the internal paragraph numbering system that is used by most classical texts.

Speed-reading is not an effective strategy with these texts. It is recommended that students read these texts patiently, with a pencil in hand to highlight and take notes as needed. This facilitates a close reading of the texts, which is an essential skill as it trains students to grapple with content within the text, and better prepares students for lecture and discussion. Students are also welcome to more critically engage with the text, once they have a sense of the basic arguments within the reading.

### **Semester Timeline:**

Tuesday, August 25: Course Introduction

Thursday, August 27: Aeschylus *Eumenides*

Tuesday, September 1: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 2

Thursday, September 3: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 2 (cont.)

Tuesday, September 8: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 3

Thursday, September 10: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 3 (cont.)

Tuesday, September 15: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 4

Thursday, September 17: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 4 (cont.)

Tuesday, September 22: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 5

Thursday, September 24: Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 5 (cont.); Review

Tuesday, September 29: **First Exam (IN-CLASS)**

Thursday, October 1: Aristophanes *Lysistrata*

Tuesday, October 6: Plato *The Republic*, Books 1-4

Thursday, October 8: Plato *The Republic*, Books 1-4 (cont.)

Tuesday, October 13: Plato *The Republic*, Books 5-10  
 Thursday, October 15: Plato *The Republic*, Books 5-10 (cont.)

Tuesday, October 20: Aristotle *Politics*, Books 1-2  
 Thursday, October 22: Aristotle *Politics*, Books 1-2 (cont.)

Tuesday, October 27: Aristotle *Politics*, Books 7-8  
 Thursday, October 29: Aristotle *Politics*, Books 7-8 (cont.)

Tuesday, November 3: Review  
 Thursday, November 5: **Second Exam (IN-CLASS)**

Tuesday, November 10: Polybius *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, pp. 41-54, 302-352, 535-541  
 Thursday, November 12: Polybius *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, pp. 41-54, 302-352, 535-541 (cont.)

Tuesday, November 17: Cicero *On Duties*, Books 1-2  
 Thursday, November 19: Cicero *On Duties*, Books 1-2 (cont.)

Tuesday, November 24: Cicero *On Duties*, Book 3  
 Thursday, November 26: **NO CLASS; Thanksgiving Holiday.**

Tuesday, December 1: Tacitus *Empire and Emperors*  
 Thursday, December 3: Tacitus *Empire and Emperors*; Review

December 7-11: **FINALS WEEK Third Exam (Friday, Dec. 11, 8-9am; location TBD)**