

DOCTORAL HUMANITIES SEMINAR: Antiquity
Politics 801-01
2015-2016 Academic Year
2 Credit Hours

Faculty of Record: Dr. Pestritto

Contributing Faculty: Professors Kenneth Calvert, Paul Rahe, Stephen Smith, Jim Stephens, Laury Ward, Grace Starry West, Thomas West, and David Whalen

This course is one of three, year-long, two-credit seminars required of all doctoral students. The seminars address the broad themes of the humanities and draw upon the breadth of the Western tradition. Their purpose is to emphasize to students the place of the study of politics within the humanities and liberal arts as a whole, and to help prepare them for teaching positions which will often be found at liberal arts institutions. The requirements of the seminar aim to aid students in their development as scholars in the humanities: they will attend scholarly lectures given by the contributing faculty and will themselves deliver a brief lecture at the conclusion of the course; they will participate in roundtable discussions of critical texts in the Western canon; and they will write a term-length paper based upon one of the seminar topics.

Organization: There are nine sessions spread out over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year: 8 lectures/seminars conducted by the contributing faculty, plus a final session where students will present the papers they have written. Each seminar session will be organized in the following manner:

4:00-5:00	Public lecture given by the contributing faculty (Lane 124)
5:00-6:00	Dinner for doctoral students and that session's contributing faculty member (Campus View Room of Dow Center)
6:00-8:00	Private seminar conducted by the contributing faculty member (Campus View Room of Dow Center)

An overview of the fall schedule is as follows (all sessions are on Thursdays). Spring dates are yet to be determined:

September 10th: Dr. Stephen Smith: *The Iliad*
September 24th: Dr. Grace Starry West: Vengeance and Forgiveness
October 8th: Dr. Kenneth Calvert: Founders' Understanding of Roman Republic
October 22nd: Dr. Paul Rahe: Classical Republicanism
November 5th: Dr. Jim Stephens: Socratic intellectualism in moral reasoning and moral theorizing

Readings and discussion questions for each of the fall sessions are provided below; readings and discussion questions for the spring sessions will be provided to students at a later date.

Requirements: Students are required to complete the assigned reading for each seminar session, to come to each session prepared to discuss the readings and especially the questions outlined by the faculty, and to participate actively in the seminar sessions. Students are required to attend all lectures, dinners, and seminar sessions in their entirety.

Short Seminar Papers: For each of the eight sessions, students will write a 700-word paper (roughly two pages, double-spaced), in response to one of the focus questions that the contributing faculty have provided. The paper will be conveyed, electronically, to the Assistant to the Graduate Dean no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Monday prior to each scheduled session.

Term Paper: Students will also write one term paper of 3,500 words (roughly 10 pages) under the supervision of one of the contributing faculty, and will make a presentation on the basis of the paper to students and faculty.

Students will need to secure the consent by March 1st of the contributing faculty member who will supervise the paper. Students should have a second or third choice of topic and faculty supervisor in mind, as we will aim to distribute the supervising equally. Papers are due on Friday, April 1st by 5:00 p.m. – one copy to the supervising faculty member, and one copy to the Graduate Dean’s office. No extensions may be granted.

Grading: The course grade will be given by the Graduate Dean, but will be based largely upon the recommendation of the contributing faculty member for whom the student has written his/her term paper. The Graduate Dean may adjust the recommended grade in two circumstances:

- 1) On the basis of his observations of student preparedness for and participation in the seminar sessions.
- 2) On the basis of substandard work on or late submission of the short seminar papers throughout the course of the year. The Graduate Dean will warn students at the appropriate time if he believes their work on the short papers is substandard.

Note: Lateness in securing approval for a term-paper topic, or in submitting the term paper itself, will result in a half-letter grade reduction in the final course grade per 24-hours late.

Attendance Policy: Attendance at all seminars, dinners, and lectures is required in order to receive credit for the course, with the exception of one absence that may be allowed only in the case of a documented serious illness or bereavement.

Incompletes: Incompletes will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances, and only by the Graduate Dean. Students should consult the Graduate Handbook for the policy on Incompletes.

Session 1, September 10th: Dr. Stephen Smith

The Shield of Homer: Poetry and Wisdom in the *Iliad*

Dr. Stephen Smith, Professor of English

Required Reading(s):

Please read the following books of the *Iliad* for our discussion. It is swift moving and thrilling. It is deeply satisfying in its poetic probing and its startling reflection on the human being. It is one of great reading experiences in the world. Only Dante, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky are Homer's peers. "Rage, Goddess, sing the rage of Achilles...."

Required text:

Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (Note: You must have this translation for the seminar and the paper.)

Focus: Books 1, 6, 9, 16, 18, 22, 24

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the subject, properly speaking, of the poem as a whole?
2. What is the political and philosophical significance of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in book one? Does Achilles have a point? Does Agamemnon have a point? Who is right? Does the poem as a whole resolve the quarrel between the sceptered king and the brilliant Achilles? Who is "the best of the Achaeans" and why, in light of the whole poem?
3. What do you see as the most significant decision of Achilles in book one? When does his spirited anger and argument, say, become the "rage" worthy of Homer's attention in the *Iliad*?
4. What lines from Nestor seem most significant to you and why in book one? What is Nestor's role in the poem?
5. What does Homer emphasize about the character and vision of Zeus in book one? How does the "grand clandestine" god and his will compare to Achilles and his will?
6. What do you think of Homer's presentation of the gods in the *Iliad*, especially their relationships amongst themselves and their relationships with human beings? Was one critic right to complain about "the soap opera on Mount Olympus"?
7. How is Odysseus different than Achilles and Agamemnon? What does Homer reveal as Odysseus' chief excellence?
8. How does Helen of Troy see and understand herself and her affair with Paris? How do you judge her truthfulness and poetry?
9. The Old Men of Troy sigh, "Beauty, terrible beauty" as they behold Helen on the ramparts. What is beauty? What is its power in human life? What forms of it are present in the poem? Are they all "terrible" and deadly?
10. Respond to the following: Achilles and Hector are mighty opposites in the poem, especially when you compare their characters, self-knowledge, virtues and desires.
11. What is Andromache's view of her husband's character? How exactly will she respond to her husband's death?
12. Is the embassy to Achilles in book nine a rhetorical failure? Why or why not?
13. Look at Achilles' responses to the embassy speeches in book nine. What do his responses reveal about his character, his vision of himself and others, and his desires? What does the embassy scene reveal about Odysseus' character?
14. Why include the tale of Meleagar in the embassy scene?
15. How do the characters of Achilles and Patroclus compare and contrast? According to the poem, what is the proper relationship between these two Myrmidons?
16. Consider the orders Achilles gives to Patroclus about entering the battle. Are there any points of tension or contradiction in the orders given—and in the order giver?
17. After the death of Patroclus, what does the scene between Thetis and Achilles reveal about Achilles's character and desires?

18. How and why does Achilles' rage intensify in the remaining books? When you consider Achilles' development from the death of Patroclus through the death of Hector, what seems to be the object of his increasing rage? How does his "rage" deepen?
19. Why does Homer include so many details about eating, or not eating, or unnatural feasting in the poem? Can you make a reading of the significance of this theme across the poem, especially in its final books?
20. Why exactly is Achilles given the shield of Hephaestus? What vision of human, political and cosmic life is expressed on the shield? How does that vision compare to the vision of Homer's shield, that is the poem itself? Are the two visions compatible, complementary, contradictory — what exactly? How do the figures in Hephaestus' shield compare to the characters in the poem?
21. What does the last battle between Hector and Achilles reveal about the character, vision, and desire of Achilles and Hector? Why did Hector decide to remain outside the gates? What do you think of his decision?
22. What is the significance of Achilles' fantastic and desperate battle against the "beautiful flow" of the river?
23. What is your response to book 24 of the *Iliad*? What do you make of the resolution of the poem, and the end of the rage of Achilles? Does the *Iliad* have a happy ending? What does the future hold?
24. What is the poem's teaching on desire, when you consider the poem as a whole?
25. What is the poem's teaching on virtue and the best human life, when you consider the poem as a whole?
26. What is the poem's teaching on self-knowledge and truthfulness, when you consider the poem as a whole?
27. What is "to blame" for the human tragedies in the poem? How might one prepare and defend oneself against such disasters?
28. What seems to be required for real change for the better in a person, as opposed to say a momentary, fleeting experience of insight, one that "passes soon enough" as a later writer put it?
29. Respond to the following: Plato was right in the *Republic*. Homer too often represents the human being as "being more than one thing at the same time" in his poetry.
30. What is the average wind speed velocity of an unladen swallow?

Session 2, September 24th: Dr. Grace Starry West:

Vengeance and Forgiveness:

Cicero's *de Officiis* and Vergil's *Aeneid*

Dr. Grace Starry West, Associate Professor of Classical Studies

Required Reading(s):

NB: It is up to you to inform yourself about basic facts of the life and work of Cicero and Vergil.

Braund, Susanna Morton, "The Anger of Tyrants and the Forgiveness of Kings" in *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian*, ed. Griswold, C. and D. Konstan, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 79-96. Focus on **pp. 85-92** (end of 1st ¶).

Cicero *de officiis* [*On Duties*]. Any translation is ok; those with sufficient Latin could try the Oxford Classical Text of *de officiis*, ed. M. Winterbottom, 1984, or the Loeb Library facing Latin and English texts, tr. W. Miller, 1913. I will be quoting from P.G. Walsh's version, *On Obligations*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Book 1 (what is honorable, *honestum*). Focus on Cicero's discussion of the origins of duties from man's nature (sections 11-17); the virtues (sections 18-93); the relative importance of the virtues (sections 152-159).

References to Julius Caesar. As tyrant, Book 2, sections 23-28; 3.19, 32, 82-85. Unlawful ambitions, 1.26; 3.36, 83. As a demagogue, 1.64; 2.21, 78. Seizure of others' property, 1.43; 2.29, 83-84; 3.36. Harshness towards Rome's enemies and subjects, 1.35; 2.28; 3.49.

Konstan, D., *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Chapter 3, "Did They Forgive? Greek and Roman Narratives of Reconciliation," 59-90. Focus on **pp. 59-66 and 77-87** (mid-page).

Vergil *Aeneid*. Again, any translation is ok. I will be quoting from F. Ahl's, (*Virgil Aeneid*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008). Line references below are to the Latin OCT text of R.A.B. Mynors, 1972. If you are not using Ahl's translation, which proceeds pretty much line for line, you may have trouble matching Latin lines with your translation's.

On the connection between Aeneas and Pallas:

Bent on establishing friendship with Evander, Aeneas claims a blood relationship as well. Evander responds with an account of his friendship with Anchises, Aeneas' father (**8.126-188**).

Trojans and Latin join together in the common worship of Hercules (**8.273-305**).

Evander promises men, gives Aeneas good political advice, and places Pallas under Aeneas' special protection (**8.470-519**).

Vergil emphasizes how precious Pallas is to Evander in his failing years (**8.554-84**).

Pallas and Aeneas together on Aeneas' ship; the friendship has blossomed (**10.159-62**).

After Turnus has killed Pallas and stripped his body, Vergil swiftly sketches the immediate and devastating effect of Pallas' death on Aeneas (**10.514-17**).

Turnus seeks Pallas out and takes contemptuous pleasure in killing him (10.441-505)

Pallas' funeral (11.42-99); Dido's robe (72-77); Evander's message to Aeneas (176-81).

Turnus gives up his claim to Lavinia, Aeneas' response (12.930-52).

Suggested Readings:

Consider this if your memory of the *Iliad* needs brushing up: Homer *Iliad*. Line numbers are to R. Lattimore's translation, Chicago University Press, 2011.

Nestor tries to resolve the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles (1.245-303).

Zeus offers to end the war; Hera refuses (4.1-67).

Agamemnon's 1st apology, via Odysseus, and Achilles' refusal (9.225-416).

Aias' rebuttal and Achilles' reprise (9.620-55); Odysseus' report (9.672-709).

Achilles tells Patroclus he is almost ready to return (16.46-63).

Patroclus is killed; Hector's behavior (16.777-end).

Thetis and Achilles (18.70-126).

Achilles' Shield: the quarrel over compensation for a murdered man (18.497-508).

After Patroclus' death, Achilles ends his anger, Agamemnon apologizes again, Odysseus insists on eating before fighting, leading to a sacrificial meal & Achilles' final acquiescence (19.1-275).

Finally facing Achilles, Hector proposes mutual oaths; Achilles refuses (22.248-272).

Mortally wounded, Hector begs Achilles to return his body; Achilles refuses (22.330-366).

Achilles and the gods (24.1-140).

Priam and Achilles (24.471-676).

Those interested in pursuing the 'modern' sense of forgiveness as defined by the authors of the secondary required readings might want to look at e.g. Shriver Jr., Donald W., "What is Forgiveness in a Secular Political Form?" in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Helmick, SJ, R.G. and R. L. Petersen, Templeton Foundation Press, 2001, 151-57, and "Truth Commissions as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," in the same volume, 247-67.

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain how Cicero understands the relationship between a person's love for his family and his obligations to his country. How might this understanding appear in Vergil's structuring of the Aeneas/Pallas relationship?
2. Compare and contrast Vergil's presentation of Aeneas at the end of the *Aeneid* with Homer's presentation of Achilles. Is Achilles a model for Aeneas?
3. Although Cicero in *de officiis* seems to adopt the Stoic view that a good man will always avoid anger (e.g. 1.69, *iracundia*) and magnanimously treat his political enemies with courtesy and forgiveness (1.88, *placabilitas* and *clementia*), he is clearly very angry with Julius Caesar. Explain.
4. Some readers of the *Aeneid* have claimed to see Aeneas as a Stoic hero. Do you see any traces of Cicero's version of Stoicism in *de officiis* 1 in the *Aeneid*?
5. At *Nicomachean Ethics* 1149a25-b2 Aristotle remarks that, in contrast to unrestrained desire, unrestrained anger is "to some extent" reasonable. (See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0054%3Abekker+page%3D1149a> and

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0054%3Abekker+page%3D1149b>

.) Some readers of the *Aeneid* take this as an indication of Aristotelian influence on Vergil's presentation of Aeneas at the end of the poem. That is, can Aeneas' anger be said to be reasonable in the sense that Aristotle seems to mean it?

6. Would Cicero, from your reading of *de officiis*, say that Aeneas was right to kill Turnus?
7. The authors of both secondary readings maintain that no Greek or Roman writer understands forgiveness in the Christian or 'modern,' transformative sense. Do you agree and, even if not, what difference would our adoption of this view make to our assessment of their works?

Session 3, October 8th: Dr. Kenneth Calvert

Julius Caesar and Cato the Younger through the eyes of the American Founders

Dr. Kenneth Calvert, Associate Professor of History

Required Reading(s):

Joseph Addison, *Cato*, edited and introduction by William-Alan Landes, Players Press, Studio City, CA, (1996). ISBN 0-88734-293-0

Discussion Questions:

1. In Addison's work, what are the the most essential of the Roman virtues and why were these also viewed as virtues for the American Republic?
2. What does Addison's 'Cato' tell us about 18th century English and American perspectives of the Roman Republic?
3. How might Juba have been understood by American colonials?
4. Discuss why Addison's 'Cato' was popular among both Whigs and Tories in 18th century England.
5. Discuss Addison's 'Cato' in light of Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar.'
6. How were Cato's virtues and Caesar's sins, as found in Addison's 'Cato,' instructive to the American Founders?

Session 4, October 22nd: Dr. Paul Rahe:

What is Classical Republicanism?

Dr. Paul Rahe, Professor of History

Required Reading(s):

Paul A. Rahe, "The Primacy of Politics in Classical Greece," *The American Historical Review* 89:4 (April 1984): 265-93.

Pericles Funeral Oration, in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, tr. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998), 90-97.

Paul A. Rahe, "In the Shadow of Lucretius: The Epicurean Foundations of Machiavelli's Political Thought," *History of Political Thought* 27:1 (Spring 2007): 30-55.

Paul A. Rahe, "Beyond Confessional Paradigms: Re-Grounding Virtue on Secular Calculation Alone," *Recht, Konfession und Verfassung im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Mathias Schmoeckel and Robert von Friedeburg (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2015), 269-83.

Discussion Questions:

My aim in this lecture will be to recall to mind something that has been largely forgotten or at least papered over in the recent academic literature on self-government – to wit, the contrast between what Benjamin Constant early in the nineteenth century termed ancient and modern liberty. I will begin with the American Revolution and the age within which it took place. Then, I will turn back to Greek antiquity – and though I will be guided by Aristotle throughout I will focus initially on commentators, all of them poets, who touched on the subject of self-government as much as a quarter of a millennium before his time. I will later touch briefly on Rome. I will say a few words concerning the importance of Christianity, and I may even deal with Machiavelli and Hobbes. The canvas is vast, and I will move quickly. I hope to stimulate and provoke.

As you do the reading, you should ponder the following questions. What is government for? How did the ancient Greeks answer this question? How did the Founding Fathers address it? On what understanding of human nature did the ancient Greeks build their suppositions concerning the scope and aim of politics? Was their understanding sound? On what understanding of human nature did Machiavelli build his republican teaching? Did he follow the ancients or break with them? If, as I will suggest, he broke with the ancients, why did he do so? Was his understanding of human nature more sound than theirs?

You should also give some thought to the conditions of liberty and consider these questions. What difference does the size of a territory make? Can a classical republic be sustained on an extended territory? If so, how? If not, why not? And what about virtue? What sorts of qualities are presupposed by classical republicanism? How does it foster those qualities? Is civic education possible in a republic situated on an extended territory? Are there limits to what one can accomplish with civic education in such a setting?

Finally, after reading the last of the four items assigned, you might want to ponder whether genuine moral or even political virtue is necessary for sustaining republican government. Can something else adequately serve the purpose? Can self-government flourish in a godless community? Or is the fear of God necessary as a backstop? And what about commerce? Is it a threat to self-governing political communities or an advantage? Does it need to be constrained? Or should it be encouraged?

Session 5, November 5th: Dr. Jim Stephens

Socrates' Paradox, Descartes' Error, and the Secret Joke of Kant's soul

Dr. Jim Stephens, Professor of Philosophy

Required Reading(s):

Plato

Phaedo, 64a-69e, 78b-84c

Republic, 330a-331d, 435b-441e

Protagoras, 352a-360e

Aristotle

De Anima, II.1 ±412a1-414a8, III.4 ±429a±10-30, III.5 ±430a10-25

Antonio Damasio, "Descartes' Error and the Future of Human Life"

Joshua Greene, "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul"

Jonathan Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology"

Daniel Kahneman, "Of Two Minds"

Stephen Stich, "Plato's Method Meets Cognitive Science"

Focus Questions:

- 1) Gutting claims that our present situation is analogous to the 17th century debate "...about the significance of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the face of the success of the new Galilean and Newtonian physics... the issue is, once again, the possibility of autonomous philosophical inquiry in a domain increasingly dominated by a new empirical science." Does his claim seem true? Why or why not?
- 2) In what ways do the classical Greek philosophers (primarily Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) argue that rational thought—'philosophical intuition'—is an autonomous means of inquiry into the nature of what's good, what's true, and so on? What properties do they think rational thought—human reason—must have in order to be autonomous in this way?
- 3) Many argue that, no matter how 'postmodern' we may take ourselves to be, classical thought is (still) central to our notions of objectivity, of justification and of knowledge, of rationality, and so on. What seem the best reasons for such a position? What seem the greatest difficulties?