

### 371 CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Section 1	T Th 12:40-2:00	110 BH	Mr. Allen
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307 S. Kedzie Hall  
432-9967

HRS: T 9-12

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Major themes and texts of political philosophy. In Fall, 2001, the focus will be on *Plato's Laws*.

**Credits:** Total Credits: 3. Lecture/Recitation/Discussion. Hours: 3 (3-0)

**Description:** **FALL 2001**

#### THE LAWS

Of the question, What is law? -- the question of Plato's *Laws* -- we rightly presume that every human being can know the answer. This question, What is law?, then, is quintessentially a non-Socratic question – a question to be distinguished from questions such as, What is man?, What is the good?, What is justice?, or even What kind of thing is law?

Plato's *Hipparchus* and *Minos*, two minor dialogues, aid in understanding the difference between this non-Socratic question and the Socratic questions. In these minor dialogues Socrates is in command, seeking the answer to What is gain? and What kind of thing is law? Whereas in Plato's *Laws*, an Athenian stranger, emphatically not Socrates, seeks to know what is the law, and even to found a law regime.

The question par excellence for the human being qua human being, then, is the precedent condition – the necessary if not sufficient condition – for founding a regime of law.

As we come to understand through close study the regime of law Plato's Athenian stranger founds (with the help of a Cretan stranger and a Spartan stranger), we fit ourselves to answer everywhere and at all times the question, What is law?, or, What is this regime of law? Thus, the quintessentially non-Socratic question is the quintessential question of political science.

The readings and activities for the course are set forth below on a week-by-week schedule. Each participant in the course is individually responsible for

fulfilling the requirements of the course as they are set out. Each must affirm to perform all assignments as required and that all work submitted in response to assignments is one's own.

*This course will be conducted in accord with MSU and Department of Political Science policies respecting academic honesty and academic responsibility. Anyone in doubt about the requirements of those codes and policies should contact the professor at the outset of the course.*

One finds most of the books to be referred to in this course in the local bookstores, either the MSU Bookstore at the International Center or the independent bookstores in East Lansing.

TEXTS:

- Plato, *Laws* (Pangle translation)
- Plato, *Phaedrus* (Nichols translation)
- Plato, *Hipparchus* (on-line)
- Plato, *Minos* (on-line)
- *The Argument & the Action of Plato's Laws*. Author: Strauss, Leo  
Publication: Chicago, University of Chicago Press, May 1998
- *Plato's Laws: The Discovery of Being*. Author: Benardete, Seth  
Publication: Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Jan. 2001
- *Metaphysics As Rhetoric: Alfarabi's Summary of Plato's "Laws."*  
Author: Parens, Joshua Publication: Albany, State University of New York Press, Sept. 1995

OTHER TEXTS:

*Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the Laws*. Author: Morrow, Glenn R. Publication: Princeton, Princeton University Press, Oct. 1993

*Plato's Political Philosophy Prudence in the Republic & the Laws*. Author: Planinc, Zdravko Publication: Columbia, University of Missouri Press, Nov. 1991

*An Introduction to Plato's Laws*. Author: Stalley, R. F. Publication: Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated, Nov. 1983

*Bibliography on Plato's Laws, Nineteen Twenty to Nineteen Seventy With Additional Citations Through May, 1975.* Author: Saunders, Trevor J.  
 Publication: Manchester, Ayer Company Publishers, Incorporated, Dec. 1979

READING CALENDAR

WEEK ONE:	AUG 28-30	<i>Hipparchus; Minos; Phaedrus</i>
	8/31/2001	Last day to change to or from CR/NC
WEEK TWO:	SEP 04-06	<i>Laws, Book I; Strauss, ch. One; Benardete, ch. One.</i>
WEEK THREE:	SEP 11 -13	<i>Laws, Book II; Strauss, ch. Two; Benardete, ch. Two.</i>
WEEK FOUR:	SEP 18-20	<i>Laws, Book III; Strauss, ch. Three; Benardete, ch. Three.</i>
WEEK FIVE	SEP 25-27	<i>Laws, Book IV; Strauss, ch. Four; Benardete, ch. Four.</i>
WEEK SIX:	OCT 02-04	<i>Laws, Book V; Strauss, ch. Five; Benardete, ch. Five.</i>
WEEK SEVEN:	OCT 09-11	<i>Laws, Book VI; Strauss ch. Six; Benardete, ch. Six.</i>
	OCT 12	<b>mid-term due</b>
WEEK EIGHT:	OCT 16-18	<i>Laws, Book VII; Strauss, ch. Seven; Benardete, ch. Seven.</i>
	10/19/2001	Last day for withdrawal or dropping courses with no grade reported
WEEK NINE:	OCT 23-25	<i>Laws, Book VIII; Strauss, ch. Eight; Benardete, ch. Eight.</i>
WEEK TEN:	OCT 30- NOV 01	<i>Laws, Book IX; Strauss, ch. Nine; Benardete, ch. Nine.</i>
WEEK ELEVEN:	NOV 06-08	<i>Laws, Book X; Strauss, ch. Ten; Benardete, ch. Ten.</i>

WEEK TWELVE:	NOV 13-15	<i>Laws</i> , Book XI; Strauss; ch. Eleven; Benardete, ch. Eleven.
WEEK THIRTEEN:	NOV 20	Alfarabi, <i>Summary of Plato's Laws</i>
	NOV 22	THANKSGIVING
WEEK FOURTEEN	NOV 27-29	<i>Laws</i> , Book XII; Strauss, ch. Twelve; Benardete, ch. Twelve.
WEEK FIFTEEN	DEC 03-06	OVERVIEW
	DEC 10	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance on each lecture in the course, as reflected by log-in records and participant affirmation.
2. Classroom participation – Regular reading of lesson assignments, as attested by participant affirmation.
3. Mid-Term Essay: Each class participant must submit on-line a brief essay (ca. 1500 words) at the end of seventh week of the seminar. That essay shall discuss the question of “What is law?”

The Mid-Term essay shall account for thirty-five per cent (35%) of the term credit.

4. Final Paper: Each class participant must submit a final essay, concentrating on some aspect of Plato's *Laws* or on some related question arising from group discussions. The topic must be approved in advance beginning in the eighth week of the seminar and not later than the close of the tenth week of the seminar. The Final Paper must reflect research in primary and secondary materials on the express subject of the seminar.

The Final Paper shall account for fifty percent (50%) of the term credit.

5. *EXPLICATION DU TEXTE*: Each class member will be assigned two books from Plato's *Laws* on which to prepare a brief summary or “explication du texte.” The summary must not exceed five pages in length, and must be turned in no later than the start of class on the Tuesday of each week. Class members turning in

the assignment each week will be selected at random to read their papers to the class. The papers may be submitted either in hard copy or via the "Digital Drop Box" through the on-line version of the course. To access the course on-line version you will need your Pilot userid and password. Go to: <http://blackboard.msu.edu>.

Each "explication" paper will be worth five (5) points toward the semester grade.

5. PARTICIPATION: 5 points. In addition to evaluation of in-class presentation, class members will have opportunity to participate through the "Discussion Board" on-line as well as in class room discussion.

**Honors Requirement:** Honors students will additionally complete an assignment based on further readings in Plato. This work will be supervised by Mr. Haduong, and Honor students will meet with him on an arranged basis to monitor the progress of the work.

### Grade calculation

Course averages, on the 100-point scale, will be converted to MSU 4-point grades on the following table:

96-100 =	4.0
90-95 =	3.5
84-89 =	3.0
78-83 =	2.5
72-77 =	2.0
66-71 =	1.5
60-65 =	1.0
< 60 =	0.0

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## APPENDIX I:

### Criteria Used in Evaluating Written Work:

While there will be many opportunities for oral discussion of written work, it will be helpful to adopt a grading scale and to commit ourselves to the use of certain explicit criteria.

The scale is numerical, as follows:

- 1- excellent
- 2- good
- 3- satisfactory
- 4- poor
- 5- very poor

To receive a 1 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. There should be a clearly stated thesis and a clearly developed line of argument.
- b. There should be a sense of organization in both the individual paragraphs and in the theme as a whole.
- c. The individual paragraphs should be developed and related logically to one another and to the thesis of the paper as a whole.
- d. There should be few glaring errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- e. Generalizations should be supported by concrete supporting evidence, and the paper should avoid stereotyped lines of argumentation.

To receive a 2 rating a paper should have all the ingredients of an excellent essay (1 rating), except that there will probably be minor problems in one or two of the above areas (a-e).

To receive a 3 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. The basic criteria for a satisfactory essay is that the student must make himself understood and must communicate ideas in spite of some technical problems.
- b. It follows that a paper receiving a 3 rating should demonstrate by college standards an adequate sense of organization, paragraphing, argumentation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Otherwise, of course, the student will not communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Essays receiving a 4 rating are generally characterized by any combination of the following:

- a. There is oftentimes an insufficient development of ideas.
- b. The student often avoids discussing the topic.
- c. There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- d. There is no clearly stated thesis and no clearly developed argument.
- e. Principles or organizing both paragraphs and the theme as a whole are ignored or applied in a very haphazard manner.
- f. There is oftentimes a lack of adequate subordination and coordination of ideas, thus resulting in too many short, choppy sentences.
- g. Generalizations oftentimes go unsupported by concrete detail, and the line of argument (if one exists) is oftentimes a rehash of clichés and stereotypes.

Essays receiving a 5 rating are generally characterized by the student's inability to make himself understood due to frequent and major problems in many of the above areas (a-g of the 4 rated essays). Due to these problems the essay is almost incoherent.