

## Ancient Political Thought Politics105A/Legal Studies 105A

University of California, Santa Cruz

Summer Session 2, MW 1pm-4.30pm, remote instruction

Instructor: Rowan Powell roapowel@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: held by appointment and in co-ordination with TA  
Mizan Rahman mrahman9@ucsc.edu

**Our first class will be Monday 26th July @ 1pm**

Zoom Link: <https://ucsc.zoom.us/j/94581275555?pwd=YXV1NEF2SkhIQVR0UXFCWUIUNTA1dz09>

### Course Description



**'Socrates!' "I went down to the Piraeus"**

*Why does Plato begin the Republic with these lines? What is the power of dialogue? What the relationship between an argument and war? Where does politics take place? And where can we seek justice?*

**Through close, careful and attentive reading of unfamiliar texts, we will make the familiar and contemporary, strange, finding new ways to question the political assumptions of our times.**

This course offers a survey of ancient political thought, focusing especially on the perspectives, problems, and disagreements that occupied ancient Athenian thinkers. In doing so, this course proposes that our own understanding of foundational political questions is both indebted to ancient thinkers and could stand to benefit from critically reassessing their questions (and answers) as they appear in their histories, dialogues, treatises, and plays. These questions include the following: what is the nature of public and private life, and how does this distinction inform politics? How and where do people engage in politics? What are the conflicts within notions of political identity? What makes a community? And what makes a community democratic? What is the place of debate, deliberation, rhetoric, and manipulation in political life? How should we make sense of political conflict? What is the nature of justice, and what is its relationship to political action and authority? Which aspects of political life are subject to change, and which are not? And finally: what is the relationship between philosophical inquiry—including our own inquiry in this course—and politics?

## Course Expectations and Assessments

There are four main components to this course: reading, lecture, discussion section, and writing assessments.

The assigned readings are the foundation of this course. Neglecting these readings will most certainly result in a low grade. Success in the course, on the other hand, requires sticking to the reading schedule and scheduling time to take notes and reflect upon what you have read. That said, the material can be dense and difficult, written in idioms that bear little resemblance to those idioms that even people who *do* read encounter today. It therefore requires that you practice “slow reading,” which takes time, concentration, patience, and reflection, **before** attending lecture and discussion. You should expect to spend approximately 10 hours per week on the readings. As you read, underline key passages, try to think through what passages that are harder to grasp might be arguing, look up unfamiliar words, and **write down questions for discussion**.

In-class lectures are the second key component. You are responsible with being familiar with what's been discussed in lectures. Be on time. Bring your copy of the text up for discussion to lecture and to discussion meetings. Stay focused.

There are three types of writing assessments that build upon each other throughout the course, including two shorter reading reflections, in-class contributions to the canvas discussion board (graded as part of your 'class participation grade') and a final term paper. **A word about academic dishonesty:** the work you submit must contain original arguments and analysis performed by you. Proper and thorough citations are required. The only acceptable sources for these essays are the assigned primary texts. Adapting or copying material from the internet or any other source may constitute academic dishonesty and will result in academic and disciplinary sanctions (including failure of the course). Don't take the chance.

Details regarding graded parts of the course are as follows:

- 1) **First Reading Response ((1200-1500 words& pages)** (20%): you will receive a prompt asking you to reflect on the assigned reading.
- 2) **Second Reading Response (1200-1500 words& pages)** (20%): you will be tasked with developing and sustaining an argument related to the assigned reading.
- 3) **Final Paper (2000-2500 words& pages)** (30%): a longer paper in which you develop an argument, comparing and synthesizing the ideas of several thinkers from this course.
- 4) **Discussion Section Participation** (30%): your participation grade will reflect attendance and participation in discussion throughout the course of the quarter. This includes each student giving a 3 minute presentation on a passage from the weeks readings, beginning with a set of questions from the text and trying to answer those in accordance with the themes of the class. Additionally, you will contribute to discussion boards as another way to contribute to your overall participation grade.









