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Course Description:
This course is designed to be a comprehensive account of the tradition(s) of political philosophy and theory. As the whole range of theories across the globe could not be covered in one course alone, this course has three foci and splits itself into those separate sections, each composing one introduction and three or four weeks devoted to the individual thinkers and a final summary and review of their contemporary applications. The first section is the tradition of ancient Graeco-Roman political philosophy (key thinkers examined will be Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero), the second is the tradition of modern European political philosophy (key thinkers examined will be Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Marx), and the third is the tradition of ancient Chinese political philosophy (key thinkers examined will include Confucius 孔子, Laozi 老子,
and Shang Yang (商鞅). These thinkers will all be examined by reading their texts, engaging with their historical context, and special emphasis given on their contemporary relevance (i.e. how their thought still influences and shapes major world decisions and perceptions).

*Having already taken a philosophy course is not a prerequisite for this course: likewise, no preexisting knowledge of China is assumed. All concepts and contexts will be explained and discussed in detail.*

**Key Learning Outcomes:**
The goal of this course is to familiarize students with political philosophy and acquaint students with critically engaging with their material and tradition. Moreover, it will give the students the tools to apply historical political philosophy to a myriad of modern contexts.

- Develop an understanding of key political thinkers and their major ideas and influences
- Understand and differentiate between political thinkers
- Understand the thinkers’ historical contexts and modern applicability
- Develop an ability to critically engage with political philosophy and analysis
- Be comfortable enough to present extensively on a topic of your choice related to this course’s content

**Assessments/Grading:**
These assessments are designed to foster participatory discussion, as well as to further students’ analytical writing through the formulation of a final essay (c. 2,500 words), on a topic either from the prompt list provided or from the student’s own choice, that will be the primary method of evaluation for the course. Short weekly “reaction papers” (c. 300 words) are also required (i.e., a thoughtful response to the week’s readings posted as a response to the week’s thread on Laulima). As this is an online course, attendance and participation is monitored in the form of forum posts on Laulima’s discussion board, wherein insightful responses to peers’ reaction papers are encouraged on a weekly basis following up from the student’s own posting. After all responses have been posted, I will highlight key points in the discussion, close the thread, and open the next week’s discussion.

A breakdown of the grading rubric is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Reaction Posts</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Texts:
This course utilizes two core volumes, both of which are readers bringing together all of our source materials. You will only need to acquire the Princeton Readings, as we will be drawing huge amounts from it. I will post selections from the other volume, as well as from other resources, but please do acquire the whole reader if you want to explore Chinese political philosophy further. Please make sure to download and spend time going through ALL the readings each week.


Volume One: Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600 (1999), Edited by de Bary & Bloom, ISBN: 9780231109390 (Because we are only dealing with small selections, I will post the selections from this book and there is no need to purchase.)

Final Essay Questions:
Please choose one question from the list below to write a 2,500 (-/+150 words) word essay (not including bibliography), due in by midnight on Monday, May 9th.

Prompt 1: In American terms, who of the thinkers would be considered “conservative”? “Liberal”? How do their thoughts coincide with a (or several) current presidential candidate’s?

Prompt 2: To what extent do you think all political thought is just a product of its time and culture and not relevant to contemporary global circumstances?

Prompt 3: How does political theory deal with ideas of human rights? Choose one thinker and analyze with textual evidence their approach to ideas of human rights.

Prompt 4: To what extent are all political theorists discussing the same issue?

Prompt 5: How do political thinkers’ personal backgrounds impact their approaches and outlooks? Gauge the relevance of personal circumstances with reference to at least three thinkers.

Prompt 6: Is there a difference between “East” and “West” political thought? Why or why not? Support your claim with reference to at least one “Eastern” and one “Western” political thinker.

Alternatively, students who wish to write their paper about another topic/question they have in mind are encouraged to first get their topic approved via email to make sure it is both relevant and practical. Topics should be chosen and discussed with me sometime before Week 14.
Office Hours:
As this is an online course, we do not have the advantage of speaking in person before or after class or having office hours. However, I am committed to making myself available, so we can communicate outside of class either by email or can arrange some time to discuss the course, research paper, or other questions.

Timetable:

Week 1  Course Introduction

Part I
Week 2  Thucydides (460—395 BCE) and Foundations of Greek Political Thought
Week 3  Plato (428/427, 424/423—348/347 BCE) and Aristotle (384—322 BCE)
Week 4  Cicero (107 BCE—43 CE)
Week 5  The Modernity of the Ancient Greeks & Romans (Summary/Relevancy)

Part II
Week 6  Introduction & Niccolò Machiavelli (1469—1527)
Week 7  Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679)
Week 8  John Locke (1632—1704)
Week 9  Karl Marx (1818—1883)
Week 10  How Much More Modern Are the Modern Europeans? (Summary/Relevancy)

Part III
Week 11  Introduction & Confucius 孔子 (551—479 BCE) and the Confucians
Week 12  Laozi 老子 (571—531 BCE) and the Daoists
Week 13  Shang Yang 商鞅 and the Legalists (390—338 BCE)
Week 14  The Modernity of the Ancient Chinese (Summary/Relevancy)

Part IV
Week 15  Final Week: Student Presentations