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POLS 286-01, Might and Right Among Nations, Fall 2008

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Political Science 286: Might and Right Among Nations
(Fall 2008)

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Course Overview:

This course will focus on what was once referred to by great statesmen and political thinkers as Great Politics, meaning especially relations among nations and the politics of war and peace. International relations and war raise some of the greatest and most difficult questions posed by political life, particularly concerning the nature and role of justice in politics. Apart from the laws and conventions of domestic political life, and the mechanisms to enforce those laws and conventions, what role do (or should) considerations of legality and morality play in political life? Does justice play a role in relations between nations? Or are such relations governed strictly by considerations of political necessity? What is (or should be) the role of religion, morality, economics, and power in international relations? What are the prospects for a just international order? In this course, we will consider what light political philosophy has to shed on these and other questions concerning great politics and justice among nations. We will study and consider the ideas of some of the greatest minds ever to grapple with these questions, carefully reading and discussing together works that are both philosophically profound and practically useful—not to mention simply delightful and interesting to read, ponder, and discuss.

Course Goals:

Very broadly stated, the goals of this course are:

- To gain a broader knowledge of some of the seminal works, ideas and theories that have historically shaped thinking about political life and international relations.
- Developing a better and deeper understanding of the works, ideas, and theories we study and learning to analyze and critically evaluate them.
- To develop a better appreciation and clearer understanding of politics and the problems it poses (particularly in international relations), as well as of how political philosophy can help us explore and understand better those problems (particularly the problem of justice).
- Learning to better communicate one's ideas in a thoughtful and persuasive manner, both orally and in writing.

Course Assignments and Basis of Grading:

- Paper 1, 4-5 pages. Due October 6 (15%).
- Paper 2, 5-6 pages. Due November 7 (20%).
- Paper 3, 5-7 pages. Due December 10 (25%).
- Daily Responses (20%).
- Participation (20%).

Please Note:

--Regular attendance and informed, thoughtful participation constitute a considerable part of your final grade and are essential to your success in this class. If you miss more than three classes, you will lose 5 points from your participation grade for each class missed, beginning with the third. Thus, four absences will cost you 10 points from your participation grade, five classes 15 points, and so on.

--One of the key goals of this course is to help you improve your expository writing. Accordingly, your papers (including your daily responses) will be graded on English style as well as content. Egregious spelling errors and violations of the rules of English usage, as well as gross ignorance of the basic principles of composition and style, will result in a lower grade.

--All papers are to be submitted in class on the day they are due. No extensions will be granted on any written assignment except with good cause. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each day late. Daily responses will **not** be accepted late or by e-mail.

--All written work is governed by the Rhodes College Honor Code.

Required Texts (listed in the order in which they will be studied):

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (Chicago)

Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* (Hackett)

Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides* (Simon & Schuster)

*Additional readings will be made available on the Rhodes academic server or by handout.

Schedule of Readings (read all assignments *before* class):

Aug. 28: Introduction

In the Beginning: The Theological Tradition and Just War Theory

Sep. 2: Selections from the Bible and Augustine on Politics and War*

Sep. 4: Alfarabi, Averroes, and Aquinas on the Relation Between Reason and Revelation; Selections from Aquinas on Conscience and Law*

Sept. 9: Further Selections from Aquinas on War and Politics; Vitoria, *On the Law of War*, pp. 295-298 and 302-327*

Sept. 11: Vitoria, *On the American Indians*, pp. 233-240 and 250-292*

The Origins of Modern Realism: Power and Money in Early Modern Thought

Sep. 16: Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Dedicatory Letter; Book I, Preface; I.1-10

Sept. 18: *Discourses on Livy*, Book I.11-21 and 25-30

Sept. 23: *Discourses*, Book I.33-34, 37, 39.1, 53, 58-60; Book II, Preface and II.1

Sept. 25: *Discourses*, Book II.2-5, 8-9, 11-15, and 18

Sept. 30: *Discourses*, Book II.24-30; Book III.1, 3-4, and 7-9

Oct. 2: *Discourses*, Book III.12, 19-24, 31, 35, 40-42, 44, 47, and 49

Oct. 7: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 13, 14 (1-5), 17 (1-2), 18 (20); Locke, *Second Treatise*, chap. 5*

Oct. 9: Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Books XX.1-12, 19-21; XXI.4-5, 6 (excerpt), 7, 17-20; XXIV.11, 23; XXV.9-13*

The Origins of Modern Idealism: History, Progress, and a New (Cosmopolitan) World Order

Oct. 14: Kant, *Universal History*; read also pp. 57-58, 89; *Perpetual Peace*, pp. 107-115

Oct.16: *Perpetual Peace*, pp. 115-139

Oct.21: No Class: Fall Break

Thucydides' Peloponnesian War: A Case Study in Justice, Necessity, and Humanity

Oct. 23: Thucydides, I 1-66

Oct. 28: Thucydides, I 67-138

Oct. 30: Thucydides, I 139-II 58

Nov. 4: Thucydides, II 59-103

Nov. 6: Thucydides, III 1-88

Nov. 11: Thucydides, III 89-IV 41

Nov. 13: Thucydides, IV 42-135

- Nov. 18: Thucydides, V 1-116 (especially 84-116)
- Nov. 20: Thucydides, VI 1-61
- Nov. 25: No Class: Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 27: No Class: Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 2: Thucydides, VI 62-VII 25
- Dec. 4: Thucydides, VII 26-VIII 1-6 and 14-17
- Dec. 9 Thucydides, VIII 21, 24-27, 45-54, 56-59, 63-98, and 104-109