

**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM**

SYLLABUS

**THE CITIZEN AND THE REGIME:
THE CONVERGENCE OF POLITICS AND ETHICS
LSHV 520 – Section 30 (Summer, 2009)
Wednesday 6:30 – 9:30 PM**

Dr. Thomas M. Kerch

Office Hours: Wednesday before class and by appointment

Office: ICC 668

Email: tmk4@georgetown.edu

tmkerch@ktk.cncdsl.com

The commonwealth is the concern of a people, but a people is not any group of men assembled in any way, but an assemblage of some size associated with one another through agreement on law and community of interest. The first cause of its assembly is not so much weakness as a kind of natural herding together of men: this species is not isolated or prone to wandering alone, but it is so created that not even in an abundance of everything do men wish to live a solitary existence.

Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, c. 54 B.C.

We may define a republic to be, or at least may bestow that name on, a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of a people; and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is essential to such a government, that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favoured class of it.

James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 39, 1787-88

I. COURSE AIMS

The principal aim of this course is to provide an introduction to the field of political philosophy, especially in respect to the interrelationship between politics and ethics. The fundamental question to be explored concerns how one can be both a morally responsible agent and a politically responsible citizen. In the past, the vast majority of political thinkers viewed politics and ethics as inextricably connected; both the individual and the political community of which he or she was a member required politics to address ethical concerns in order that both the citizen and the regime could live well and flourish. The texts to be read are among the most important works in the field over a period of twenty-four hundred years. It is hoped that a thorough reading and comprehension of these works will: (1) familiarize the student with the general concerns of political thought; (2) indicate the close connection between political and moral philosophy; (3) demonstrate that political thought is an ongoing dialogue among thinkers from various times and historical circumstances; (4) suggest that some of the concerns that confronted philosophers centuries ago are still relevant to the problems of today. In addition to a basic exposure to the political and moral issues confronted by political philosophers, the readings also contain a thematic thread tying them together – the concept of republicanism. At the core of republican

political thought is the idea that the regime exists for the common good of its citizens. Thus, by attending to questions concerning the common good, as well as questions concerning justice and liberty, republicanism directly addresses the connection between politics and ethics. By utilizing writings that are either foundational for republican thought or which expand upon and add new dimensions to it, the experience of confronting these texts will be enhanced by seeing the manner in which a particular theme is articulated by a diverse group of thinkers who concern themselves with the manner in which politics is linked to ethics.

II. TEXTS

Plato, *Republic*, translated by Grube (Hackett)

Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, translated by Zetzel (Cambridge University Press)

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by Mansfield (University of Chicago Press)

Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Writings*, translated by Gourevitch (Cambridge)

Hamilton, Jay, and Madison, *The Federalist*, edited by Carey (Liberty Fund)

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, edited by Meyer (Harper Perennial Classics)

Note on the texts: It is strongly urged that all students purchase the same editions. While there are many fine translations of these works, the ones that have been selected most accurately reflect their originals. Most of these editions contain very useful introductory essays and notes to aid in understanding what are quite often difficult arguments. Furthermore, it is far easier to refer to a particular passage on a particular page if we are all using the same text.

III. EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance: regular attendance is required and expected. If you wish to understand these texts as the foundation for future thinking about how we live as political and moral beings, then attendance in class and close attention to the readings is imperative.

B. Participation: the course will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and student presentations. Questions, discussions, and disagreements are both welcome and an excellent way of engaging with the texts you will be reading.

C. Assignments:

(1) Seminar presentation

Each student will make one 15 minute presentation. These presentations will take the form of an exegesis of an assigned text. While the principal focus of the seminar presentation will be an explanation and analysis of the text, it is expected that interpretive questions about the text will be raised for the purpose of facilitating discussion. (A schedule of presentations will be arranged at the first meeting).

(2) Final paper

A research paper (25) pages on a topic of your own choosing. The topic must be approved in advance. While the paper should reflect your particular interests, it should attempt to take into consideration the general subject matter of the course. It may focus on a particular theme that runs across more than one author, or it may examine aspects of a single writer's philosophy. (A brief paper proposal will be due on **July 8, 2009**. The due date for the research paper will be announced at the beginning of the semester).

D. Grading:

Your grade for the course will be computed as follows:

Participation – 10%

Seminar presentation – 20%

Final paper – 70%

IV. SCHEDULE OF READINGS

May 27

Introduction to the course; introduction to Plato

Plato, *Republic*, Books I and IV

It is imperative that Books I and IV of the *Republic* be read prior to the first class

June 3

Plato, *Republic*, Books V, VIII, and IX

June 10

Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Books I, II, III, and VI

June 17

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

June 24

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (First Discourse)*

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Second Discourse)*

July 1

The Federalist, Republicanism: Essays 1, 9, 10, 14, 39

The Federalist, Separation of Powers: Essays 47-51, 63, 67, 68, 73, 74

July 8

The Federalist, Constitutionalism: Essays 78, 80, 81, 84

The Federalist, Human Nature and Virtue: Essays 6, 21, 10, 51, 55, 57, 62, 64

Paper proposal due

July 15

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction; Vol. I, Part II, Chapters 6-9; Vol. II, Part I,

Chapters 1-4; Part II, Chapters 2-8

July 22

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. II, Part III, Chapters 1-2, 8-12, 18, 22; Vol. II, Part IV,

Chapters 1-4, 6-8