PO65503: Wednesday 2-4:30, McGuinn 223  
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Office Hours: Mondays, 11am-1pm, Carney 234

## The Question of Justice

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to an important – and perhaps the fundamental – theme of political philosophy: What is justice? We seek to develop not a *theory* of justice, but an appreciation of the *problem* of justice, which hopefully will be the basis of continued reflection in our lives. Accordingly, instead of offering a survey of political philosophy, we will place considerable emphasis on historical, political, and literary works that show the problem of justice emerging out of deliberations about the right course of action, and that raise and explore such questions as: What is the place of justice in the economy of human life? Is justice more important than personal or national interest? Is the place of justice different in foreign affairs than in domestic affairs? Do we have reason to think that justice will prevail in the world?

## Required Texts

* Plato, *Gorgias*, Cornell University Press.
* Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, Hackett Publishing Co.
* Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hackett Publishing Co.
* Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Hackett Publishing Co.
* Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, Fordham University Press.
* Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, Hackett Publishing Co.

Please obtain the exact editions of each of these texts – we will be reading from them in class and it is important that everyone have the same translation and page numbers.

## Course Requirements

Your grade will have three components:

1. Three 1500-word interpretive essays (worth 20%, 25%, and 30% of the grade). These papers will be on topics to be announced. Papers will lose 3 points out of 100 for each 24 hours that they are late.
2. Your contribution to the seminar (worth 25%).
3. Six sets of discussion questions (**two for each of the three parts of the course**). These will be graded as either Plus (+), Satisfactory (S), or Minus (–). Each grade of Plus will add one point to your final grade and each grade of Minus will subtract one point. A grade of Satisfactory will not change the final grade. These papers must be emailed to me at [gilmoreg@bc.edu](mailto:gilmoreg@bc.edu) by NOON THE DAY BEFORE we discuss the relevant assignment in class. Failure to provide enough questions will result in a subtraction of 2 points of the final grade for each set not completed. **Please see the final section of the syllabus for details concerning this assignment.**

Finally, since the class meets only once a week, more than one absence in the class will lower your grade. I am of course willing to make exceptions for genuine emergencies.

This seminar is writing intensive and the *quality* of your writing will greatly affect your grade. If you have trouble writing clear, grammatical, and well-organized papers, you should take advantage of the Connors Family Learning Center’s writing assistance program. Also, if English is not your first language, the Connors Center has special resources to help you with your papers.   
Information is available at: (<http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/writing.html>)

Plagiarism (unattributed use of the thoughts and words of others) in a paper will result in an automatic *F for the course* and additional disciplinary action recommended by the College. You should review the University’s statement on Academic Integrity and take the Political Science Department’s Academic Integrity Quiz. The relevant websites are:

* <http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html>
* <http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz.html>

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, [dugganka@bc.edu](https://email.bc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=RcUTEDeiakSk59qVXruu4-_ApwLH1tAIkrZuQmnkFivWH_BymouA6MOGSS2z0MKC_fsacMzQyAE.&URL=mailto%3adugganka%40bc.edu), at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, [paulette.durrett@bc.edu](https://email.bc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=RcUTEDeiakSk59qVXruu4-_ApwLH1tAIkrZuQmnkFivWH_BymouA6MOGSS2z0MKC_fsacMzQyAE.&URL=mailto%3apaulette.durrett%40bc.edu), in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

## Classroom Policies

A few simple rules:

* You will not be allowed to use laptops.
* Audio recording is allowed as long as you obtain prior permission from me.
* Eating, drinking, etc. should be saved for the break.

## Office Hours, Email, etc.

My office hours are Mondays, 11am-1pm, or by appointment, in Carney 234. Please feel free to stop by my office as often as you’d like. The best way to reach me outside of office hours is through email at [gilmoreg@bc.edu](mailto:gilmoreg@bc.edu).

## Schedule of Reading **Part I**

* January 14 Introduction
* January 21 Plato, *Gorgias*, 447a-461b.
* January 28 Plato, *Gorgias*, 461b-481b.
* February 4 Plato, *Gorgias*, 481b-502d.
* February 11 Plato, *Gorgias*, 502d-end.
* February 16 **1st Long paper due via email by noon.**

### Part II

* February 18 Thucydides, 1-13 and Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a  
   Cosmopolitan Intent*
* February 25 Thucydides, 15-58
* March 4 **Spring Break – no classes.**
* March 11 Thucydides, 59-88
* March 18 Thucydides, 97-123
* March 23 **2nd Long paper due via email by noon.**
* March 25 Thucydides, 123-160

### Part III

* April 1 Thucydides, 89-96 and Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Epistle Dedicatory,  
   Introduction, Chapters VI, X, and XIII
* April 8 Hobbes, *Leviathan,* ChaptersXIV, XVII, and Review and Conclusion
* April 15 *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, Debates 3, 6, and 7
* April 22 Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*
* April 29 Review and conclusion.
* May 1 **3rd Long paper due via email by noon.**

Reader Response Assignment: Discussion Questions  
  
You are required to submit six sets of discussion questions (**two for each of the three parts of the course**). Each submission should contain at least **five** questions aimed at facilitating substantive discussion in class. Your ability to submit excellent questions will demonstrate:

1. That you have mastered the reading.
2. That you have reflected on the important issues at stake.
3. That you are able to see the broader implications of those issues.
4. And that you are able to identify interpretive or theoretical puzzles which you are not yet able to solve.

The most important measure of a good question is: **can it generate productive discussion in class**?

**Tips:**

* Questions can be provocative, even controversial, as long as they are not polemical.
* One strategy is to find *unstated* assumptions and ask why they are unstated.
* Another strategy would be to connect the important themes of the reading to **relevant** contemporary political disputes.

**Bad Questions:**

* Questions which can be answered with a simple yes or no.
* Straightforward matter of fact questions: “How old was Socrates at this time?”
* Vague questions: “What’s the point of this conversation?”
* Off topic: “What would Socrates say about global warming?”
* Asking for a summary.
* Questions copied from the Internet: this is a violation of academic integrity.
* Questions requiring too much outside knowledge: “How does Plato’s portrayal of Gorgias differ from his extant speeches?”

**Good Questions:**

* “How does Gorgias’s concern for his reputation affect his responses to Socrates?”
* “What does Thucydides think of Cleon as a rhetorician and as a statesman?”
* “Kant speaks of a ‘league of nations’ in Perpetual Peace. In what ways is this similar to and different from the United Nations?”
* “How does Lincoln’s rhetoric change when he faces a hostile audience as opposed to a friendly one?”