

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE

MACHIAVELLI AND THE ROMANS - POLS 345 (3 credits)

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Fall Semester 2011 - Meeting Time: Wednesday 3:35 - 6:30 pm – Room 303

Course content

Granted Machiavelli's republican credentials as a civil servant of the Florentine republic between 1498 and 1512 and as the author of the future *Discourses*, the genuineness of his desire to work for the autocratic Medici has been a puzzle in Machiavelli's exegesis.

We will go through the various interpretations of *The Prince* that stem from the uncertainty about Machiavelli's intentions in writing the book. The interest of these various interpretations will be to have the students reading *The Prince* through several different lenses and having the sense of its width and depth. We will notably touch various issues such as Machiavelli's biography and historical context, Machiavelli's dedication to serving the state, Machiavelli's love for the people, Machiavelli's notions of *fortuna* and *virtù*, and doctrine of imitation, and Machiavelli's political science.

We will not go beyond an introduction to the *Discourses on the Ten First Books of Titus Livius* that is the book that the best assesses Machiavelli's republicanism. However, our reading of *The Prince* will allow us to identify many bridges towards the *Discourses* such the relations between the prince and his people -a recurrent topic in *The Prince*.

We will find ways of visiting Machiavelli's then property and place of exile at San Andrea in Percussina where he wrote *The Prince* -15 kms from Florence- and maybe have a lunch there -in what now is the *Albergaccio del Machiavelli*.

Course objective

This course will introduce the students to Machiavelli's political thought through lectures and through a thorough reading of *The Prince* chapter by chapter and through learned scholars' commentaries. The important expected outcome of the course is that students have a firm knowledge of the author's *The Prince* and a firm idea of the content of the *Discourses*.

Course description

Each session consists in the presentation by one or two students of the reading of the day, namely a group of chapters from *The Prince*. All the students are required to hand a proper outline of each session's reading at the end of the session. The session gives rise to a discussion.

The mid- and final exams consist in outlining and commenting in a proper way a learned article on *The Prince*.

Course grading

Participation of students (the weekly outlines, oral participation, and constancy/assiduity along the semester) counts for 50% of the total grade.

Mid-term exam and final exam contribute each to 25% of the total grade.

Bibliography

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Robert M. Adams, 1992, London & New York, W. W. Norton & Company, (**required**) (paperback ISBN-13: 978-0393962208)

Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli. A Very Short Introduction*, 2000, Oxford, Oxford University Press (**required**) (paperback ISBN-13: 978-019285407-0)

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, edited and translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, 1996, Chicago, University of Chicago Press (**suggested**) (paperback ISBN-13: 978-0226500362)

A number of **articles** will be made available on **Blackboard**

SCHEDULE

September 21, 2011

- Format of the course
- *Lecture*: Historical and political background - Machiavelli's Life - The Various Interpretations of *The Prince* - *Lecture*: The Prince's Idea and Structure

September 28, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - *The Dedicatory Letter: Niccolò Macchiavelli to His Magnificence Lorenzo de' Medici*
 - Chapters I to V
- *Lecture*: On Conquest in Chapters III-V

October 05, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters VI-VIII
- *Lecture*: Moses, Machiavelli and Savonarola - Borgia and Agathocles: Cruelty, *Virtù* and Glory

October 12, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters IX-XI
- *Lecture*: Machiavelli, the People, and the Church

October 19, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters XII-XIV
- *Lecture*: Armies and Mercenaries

October 26, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters XV-XVIII
- *Lecture*: Machiavelli's pessimistic humanism
- Presentation of the mid-term exam

November 02, 2011

- *Mid-term exam*

November 09, 2011

- Correction and Discussion of the mid-term
- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters XIX-XX
- *Lecture*: Machiavelli's Notions of Justice

November 16, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapter XXI-XXIII
- *Lecture: Glory, Fox and Lion in Machiavelli*

November 18, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapters XXIV-XXV
- *Lecture: Fortuna and Virtù*

November 30, 2011

- Reading and discussing *The Prince*:
 - Chapter XXVI
- *Lecture: The question of the composition of *The Prince*, the Puzzle of the Date of Chapter 26, and Machiavelli's Patriotism*

December 07, 2011

- *Lecture: Recapitulation of *The Prince* and Bridges Towards the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius**

December 14, 2011

- *Final exam*

THE WEEKLY OUTLINE

The weekly outline is a thorough restatement of each of the chapters read and a reaction to them.

THE REVIEW PAPER

The review paper is a thoughtful account of the piece of writing you have read. The point of the review is to analytically restate the argument(s) and the contents of the reading, to discuss it, and to propose issues and bibliographical sources for further research. Your review paper should have the following structure:

- 1) Report the **complete bibliographical reference** of the piece you are reviewing: author, (original year of publication), actual year of publication, "title of the chapter/essay", *title of the book from which the chapter/essay is extracted*, editor, place of publication, publisher, page numbers.
- 2) The **issue** and **main argument(s)**:
 - a. What is the issue discussed in the writing?
 - b. Formulate the argument into a few sentences. Or what is the author trying to convince us of?
- 3) How does the author lead the argument? or What the **demonstration** consists in?
 - a. Describe in one paragraph the structure of the chapter/essay; (the reading includes n sections: an introduction (pp.); section 1 entitled (pp.); section 2 entitled (pp.); etc...
 - b. Restate the content of the chapter/essay section by section (and sub-section by sub-section). If necessary, identify by yourself sections in the chapter/essay. The scope of this exercise is to follow and restate the author's reasoning step by step.
- 4) We aim to make an **assessment** of the argument in two parts that are **strengths** and **weaknesses**. Indicative questions toward such assessment are: Does the argument convince us? Is only part of it convincing? Is it cogent/logical? Do we think it helps us understanding something fundamental about the issue at stake? Is there any particular assumption that is important for the argument that we think should be strengthened? Are the empirical facts reported by the author relevant, accurate? Are there any alternative or counter-arguments mentioned by the author her/himself? Does the author use particular words or concepts that are particularly important for his/her argument/demonstration? What does s/he mean by these words or concepts? Is s/he consistent in her/his use of them?...
- 5) **Further research**: Retain one or two questions/issues from your assessment that you would like to think about further, and propose from the bibliographical references provided in the textbook(s) at least two sources that are likely to address your questions/issues. Say why you think the sources in question are apposite. Fully report their bibliographical references.