

MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS: MACHIAVELLI

SSC 402

Semester: Fall 2015/2016

The class will meet on Thursday from 9.30 to 12.15 (Aula 1)

Instructor: Alice Martini, Ph. D.

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Office hours: Thursday 12.15 - 13.15 by appointment

Friday 14 – 15 skypecalls only by appointment

Course Description

Niccolo' Machiavelli (Florence, 1469-1527) is generally known as the father of Political Science. He was the first political thinker to analyse the birth, life and death of States only on the basis of facts and human behaviour, with no concession to utopia, or ideology, or theology. That is why Machiavelli's thought has remained modern throughout the centuries, and up until today has fascinated and attracted many politicians and rulers of very different ideological extraction.

This course will be based on the reading of Machiavelli's masterpiece, *The Prince*, and his crucial play, *La Mandragola*, and on selected readings from *The Discourses on the First Decade by Titus Livy*. The aim of this course is to help the students to obtain a full understanding of Machiavelli's culture and political thought, using a direct, critical approach to primary sources.

Particular attention will be paid to Machiavelli's cultural formation which was based on the Classics, and to the Florentine and Italian historical context in which he lived.

The interest in Machiavelli throughout the centuries will be considered, and special attention will be paid to his influence on the major modern political philosopher.

Course requirements:

- 1) Active participation in the class and regular readings of assigned texts;
- 2) One mid-term test: multiple choice questions and a brief essay to write in class;
- 3) One oral presentation (possibly with .ppt support) on a minor topic chosen together with the instructor;
- 4) One final exam: multiple choice questions and a brief essay to write in class.

Roll will be called at all classes.

Textbooks:

The Portable Machiavelli, Penguin Books;

Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press;

Other readings will be assigned during class.

Grading scale:

30% for the mid-term;

40% for the final exam;

20% for groups' oral presentations;

10% active participation and attendance.

Correspondence between points in mid and final term and mark:

A 100-94

A- 93-90

B+ 89-87

B 86-84

B- 83-80

C+ 79-77

C 76-74

C- 73-70

D+ 69-67

D 66-64

D- 63-60

Tentative class calendar

November, 5:

- Short outlook of the course;
- The political situation in Italy between 15th and 16th centuries

November, 12:

- Machiavelli's biography and legacy;
- Video "Medici, godfather of Renaissance" (part I).

November, 19:

- The role of classic antiquity and of political experience in Machiavelli's production;
- *The Prince*: intro and reading chapters 1-4;

November 26: NO CLASS DUE TO THANKSGIVING BREAK

December, 3:

- *The Prince*: State-building and State-keeping (5-9)
- *The Prince*: the question of security (chapters 10-14);

December, 10:

- *The Prince*: defining "political virtue" (chapters 15-23).

December, 17:

- MID TERM: 9.30-10.30
- Visit to Santa Croce to Machiavelli's cenotaph (to be confirmed): 10.45-12.15

January, 7:

- *The Prince*: the role of *Fortuna* in human affairs (chapter 25);
- *The Prince*: a new prince for Italy (chapters 24 and 26);
- Is a Prince suitable for democratic systems? *House of Cards* clips selection.

January, 14:

- *The Discourses*: the ideal democracy
- Roman republic and Machiavelli ideal government.
- Reference: Book One, chapters 2-4, 10-12 and 58; Book Two, chapter 2; Book Three, chapters 21 and 41.

January, 21:

- The “minor works”: The Mandrake root, Florentine histories, The art of war.
- Students’ presentations.

January, 28:

- The myth: Machiavelli and Western political thought and politicians up until today;
- Students’ presentations.

February, 4:

- Review of the course;
- Movie: *La Mandragola*.

February, 8 - 11: FINAL EXAM exact day and time to be confirmed announced

Class costs:

2 Euro for the reservation of the visit at Santa Croce (to be confirmed).

Attendance policy

A) Attendance to all CSU courses is mandatory. One unexcused absence is allowed during the semester but more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade as follows (excused absences will be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies): **TWO** unexcused absences, lowers by 1.5 letter grade (i. e., B to C-); **THREE** unexcused absences, lowers by 3 letter grades (i. e., A to D). More than **THREE unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.**

B) In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding ten minutes will be considered an absence.

C) **Dates of mid-term and final exams can not be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs.** Students should take note of the dates and hours of the midterm and final exams and plan their trips after the last exam. It is important to inform friends and relatives about these exam dates so that no tickets are purchased for you that will interfere with these exam dates.

Missing the midterm or the final exam will mean failure of the course.

D) During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructor. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.

E) Use of the computer is restricted to oral presentations, unless previously approved by the professor.

F) Cellular phones must be **turned off** or placed on *silent mode* during class.