



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM - FIRENZE

SSC 402

MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS: MACHIAVELLI

The class will meet on Thursday from 10.30 to 13.15 in Aula Magna
Semester: Fall 2017/2018

Instructor: Alice Martini, Ph. D.

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Office hours: Thursday 13.30 - 14.30 by appointment
Friday 14 – 15 skypecalls only by appointment

Course Description

Niccolò 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, made up by multiple choice questions and a brief essay to write in class;
- 3) One oral presentation (possibly with .ppt support) on a topic chosen together with the instructor;
- 4) One final exam, made up by multiple choice questions and a brief essay to write in class.

Students must complete ALL requirements for passing the course.

Textbooks:

1. *The Portable Machiavelli*, Penguin Books, (15 Euro approx.);
Please note that this is an anthology of Machiavelli's production; all the books by Machiavelli are available also online. During the first lesson we will check together the translations and pick the most appropriate.
2. Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, (10 Euro approx.);
3. Other readings will be assigned during class.

Grading scale:

35% for the mid-term;
40% for the final exam;
15% for groups' oral presentations;
10% active participation and attendance.

Tentative class calendar

November, 9:

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

November, 16:

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

November, 23: No class (Thanksgiving);

November, 30:

- The role of classic antiquity and of political experience in Machiavelli's production;
- Video "Medici, godfather of Renaissance" (part II).

December, 7:

- Introducing the Prince: overview
- *The Prince*: State-building and State-keeping (chapters 1-9);

December, 14:

- *The Prince*: the question of security (chapters 10-14);
- *The Prince*: defining "political virtue" – The ideal principedom – (chapters 15-18).

December, 21:

- **MID TERM: 10.30 – 11.45**
- **Movie La Mandragola (to be confirmed)**

January, 11:

- *The Prince*: defining "political virtue" – The ideal prince – (chapters 18-24).
- *The Prince*: the role of *Fortuna* in human affairs (chapter 25);

January, 18:

- *The Prince*: a new prince for Italy (chapter 26);
- *The Discourses*: the ideal democracy

January, 25:

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

February, 1:

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

February, 8:

- Review of the course;
- Students’ presentations.

February, 12 – 15: FINAL EXAM (date to be announced).

Class costs:

20 Euro (approx.) for books.

“3-Hour” 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 **five** 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 there 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) Eating is not allowed in class.

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