

SSC 402, MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS: MACHIAVELLI

Spring Semester 2014

Dr. Alice Martini

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SYLLABUS

The class will meet: Thursday, 9:30 – 12:15

Office hours: Before (by appointment) and after class.

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) One mid-term test and a final exam. Each will consist of a single essay to write in class.
- 2) Active participation in the class and regular readings of assigned texts.
- 3) In the second term students will work in groups to prepare at home a paper on a minor topic chosen together with the instructor.

Roll will be called at all classes.

EVALUATIONS:

30% for the mid-term.

35% for the final exam.

25% for groups' oral presentations.

10% for active participation in class.

CLASS TOPICS

1) *The Man:*

- Niccolò Machiavelli student of Classics and government official in Renaissance Florence.

2) *The Political Scientist:*

- *The Prince:*

- a) State-building and State-keeping (chapters 1-9);
- b) the question of security (chapters 10-14);
- c) defining "political virtue" (chapters 15-23);
- d) about fortune's role in human affairs (chapter 25);
- e) a new prince for Italy (chapters 24 and 26);

- *The Discourses:*

- a) State and people;
 - b) democracy and conflict;
 - c) politics and religion;
 - d) freedom and defence of the mother-country.
- (Book One, chapters 2-4, 10-12 and 58; Book Two, chapter 2; Book Three, chapters 21 and 41)

3) *The Historian and The Playwright:*

- the *History of Florence*;
- the *Mandragola*.

4) *The Myth :*

- Machiavelli and Western political thought and politicians up until today.

EXAMINATION SCHEDULE:

- a) Mid-term exam: April 17, 2014.
- b) **Final Exam:** May 26 – 29, 2014 **TO BE ANNOUNCED**

TEXTBOOKS:

1. *The Portable Machiavelli*, Penguin Books;
2. Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press;
3. Other readings will be assigned during class.

General CSU Attendance Policy 2013-2014

"3 – Hour" Attendance Policy (for classes that meet once a week for 3 hours)

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 grades (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**.

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.

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.

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

Other class policies:

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

Eating is NOT allowed in class.

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