Political Science 2801 -- Justice and Power

Professor Darrell Dobbs  http://www.marquette.edu/polisci/faculty_dobbs.shtml  Marquette University, Fall Term 2015  Office Hours: 1:00-4:00 pm TH  421 Wm. Wehr Physics

Course Rationale

Think of justice, power, and authority as the ABCs of politics. Lacking a sound understanding of these elementary principles, one could no more claim to understand politics than an illiterate could hope to write Paradise Lost. Yet many supposed experts in the university, in government, and in the press take it for granted that justice is simply a cultural construct and that authority exists only when those with whom we agree possess power. Our task, in this introductory course in political philosophy, is to free ourselves from the shackles of these common prejudices. Above all, we must attempt accurately to discern the authoritative demands of justice, not so much as they have found others wanting, but especially as they challenge us most directly and in common: namely, as members of a learning community and as American citizens.

Requirements, Expectations and Grading

You are expected to attend every meeting of this class, arriving on time and having carefully read the assigned texts. Throughout the term you will be asked to prepare summaries, formulate questions, and produce explanations concerning points of interest you encounter in the required reading. There will be a midterm examination and a final project or examination. Your summaries, questions, and answers will together determine 40%, the midterm examination 30%, and the final project or examination 30% of your final grade. Absences may be excused by your instructor’s discretion upon receipt of your written request via date-stamped email prior to class time of the day of your absence. Your second, and every subsequent, unexcused absence will lower your final grade by one step: e.g., B ----> BC.

Class Schedule

Unit One: What, after all, is Justice? Does Might Make Right? What Good is Justice?

Week 1-3  Introductions; Plato, Republic 327a-336a; 336b-343a; 343a-348b; 348b-350d; 350d-354c

Week 4  Machiavelli, The Prince chs.6-7, 12-14; chs.15-21

Unit Two: Justice-Seeking in Higher Education

Weeks 5-6  C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man, ch.1; Plato, Republic 376c-403c; 403d-412a; Fr. Guido’s 5 Minute University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO8x8eoU3L4; Dorothy Sayers, The Lost Tools of Learning

Week 7  St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia-IIae Q.91 a.2; ST Ia-IIae Q.94 aa.2-3

Week 8  Midterm Examination; Midterm Break

Weeks 9-10  Aquinas, ST Ia-IIae Q.94 aa.4-5; Q. 95 aa.1-2, King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail; Aquinas, ST Ia-IIae Q.96 a.2, Lincoln, Temperance Address; Aquinas, ST Ila-IIae Q.64 aa.1-3, Lincoln, Lyceum Address

Unit Three: Justice-Seeking in the Study of America’s Founding


Week 12  Frederick Douglass, The United States Constitution: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?, H.L. Gates, Jr., Did Black People Own Slaves?, The Northwest Ordinance of 1787; Aquinas, ST Ila-IIae Q.66 a.2, Jefferson, Confidential Memo, Locke, Second Treatise of Government, ch.5

Week 13  Tocqueville, Democracy in America, vol. I. part ii. ch.7, vol. II. part iv. chs.1-3,6; Thanksgiving Break

Week 14  Tocqueville, Democracy in America, vol. II. part i. ch.5, vol. II. part ii. chs.15-17; vol. I. part i. ch.5 (“on the political effects of administrative decentralization”), vol. II. part ii. chs.4,5,7

Week 15  Lincoln, On the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Alexander Stephens, Cornerstone Speech; Review