

Political Science 302
Spring 2009
Peter Ahrens Dorf

Office: Chambers 3006
Office Hours: M, W 10:30-11:30,
T, TH 1-2, F 10:30-12:30, and by
appointment.
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AMBITION, FREEDOM, AND EMPIRE

Texts to be Purchased:

Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. and Nathan Tarcov (University of Chicago Press).

Machiavelli, The Prince. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. (University of Chicago Press).

Livy, The Early History of Rome: Books I-V of the History of Rome from its Foundation.
Translated by Aubrey de Selincourt (Penguin).

Livy, Rome and Italy: Books VI-X of the History of Rome from its Foundation. Translated by Betty Radice (Penguin).

Livy, The War with Hannibal: Books XXI-XXX of the History of Rome from its Foundation.
Translated by Aubrey de Selincourt (Penguin).

Shakespeare, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure (Signet Classics)

NOTE: Portions of Livy discussed by Machiavelli will be read along with the chapters of the Discourses in which they are discussed, as indicated by the notes in the Mansfield-Tarcov translation and by the Supplement on Livy at the end of the Syllabus.

Goals of the Course:

From Achilles and Alcibiades to Churchill, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein, ambition, or the love of fame and glory, has always been a central--and deeply controversial--feature of political life. Is it "the ruling passion of the noblest minds," as Alexander Hamilton, one of the founders of the American republic, claimed? Or is it the burning passion of such destroyers of republics as Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon, as Abraham Lincoln claimed?

In this course we will explore the nature of ambition by studying first the political philosopher who, of all philosophers, seems most friendly to political ambition--whose name is virtually synonymous with ruthless ambition--Machiavelli. We will then turn to Shakespeare and consider his dramatic presentation of a series of such rulers and potential rulers as Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, Octavius, and Cleopatra in his Roman plays. Finally, we will consider Shakespeare's treatment of political ambition within the Christian setting of the Holy Roman Empire in Measure for Measure. Both thinkers devote considerable attention to the Roman Republic, perhaps the most spectacularly successful political regime of all time, one which maintained its freedom for hundreds of years, which conquered much of the known world, and which established an empire, parts of which lasted for some two thousand years. We will examine what Machiavelli and Shakespeare think of political ambition as a whole and of the imperial ambition of Rome in particular.

As we study these works, we will consider such questions as the following: What are the proper objects of ambition? What is the surest path to lasting, or everlasting, glory? What is the most effective way to found a political, moral, and religious order and to maintain it after one dies? What is the relation between ambition and moral virtue, especially, but not only, justice? What is the relation between ambition and piety, especially, but not only, Christianity? What is the relation between the love of glory and reason?

Requirements:

There will be two short (6-8 page) papers (worth 25% each) and one longer (12-14 page) paper (worth 45%). You must do all of the written work in order to pass the course. Unless there is an emergency, I will not accept any written work after the last day of exams. You will be docked a half of a grade (for example, from A to A-) for each calendar day on a paper which you hand in late unless you either have asked for (and received) my permission beforehand or have a very good excuse. 5% of your grade will be determined by class participation. Regular attendance is therefore required. You will be expected to read the assigned texts carefully before we discuss them in class. In order to help you prepare for class discussion, a sheet of study questions will be handed out for each reading.

Note: The provisions of the Davidson Honor Code govern all written work. Please let me know if you have any questions about the Honor Code.

Classroom Etiquette:

As a courtesy to your fellow students, please come to class on time. Please turn off all cell phones before coming to class. And do please resist the temptation to get up during class—to fill a bottle of water, call a friend, or perform the daily ablutions—unless Nature herself absolutely demands it.

Assignments:

I. Machiavellian Ambition and Free Republics

January 13	Introduction
January 15	<u>Discourses</u> , Epistle Dedicatory; Preface to Book I, chapters 1-8.
January 20	<u>Discourses</u> , Book I, chapters 9-15.
January 22	<u>Discourses</u> , Book I, chapters 16-27.
January 27	<u>Discourses</u> , Book I, chapters 28-34.
January 29	<u>Discourses</u> , Book I, chapters 35-45.
February 3	<u>Discourses</u> , Book I, chapters 46-60

February 5 Discourses, Book II, Preface, chapters 1-5.

February 10 Discourses, Book II, chapters 6-18.
FIRST PAPER DUE

February 12 Discourses, Book II, chapters 19-33.

February 17 Discourses, Book III, chapters 1-6.

February 19 Discourses, Book III, chapters 7-18.

February 24 Discourses, Book III, chapters 19-31.

February 26 Discourses, Book III, chapters 32-39.

March 10 Discourses, Book III, chapters 40-49.

March 12 Prince, Epistle Dedicatory, chapters 1-14.

March 17 Prince, chapters 15-26.
SECOND PAPER DUE

March 19 Shakespeare, Coriolanus

March 24 Coriolanus

II. Shakespeare and the Question of Political Ambition

March 26 Julius Caesar

March 31 Julius Caesar

April 2 Julius Caesar

April 7 Antony and Cleopatra

April 9 Antony and Cleopatra

April 16 Antony and Cleopatra

April 21 Measure for Measure

April 23 Measure for Measure

April 28 Measure for Measure

April 30	Conclusion
May 5	Overview
May 11	FINAL PAPER DUE FOR SENIORS IN CHAMBERS 3006 AT 12:15 P.M.
May 13	FINAL PAPER DUE FOR NON-SENIORS IN CHAMBERS 3006 AT 12:15 P.M.