

University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Government and Politics

**GVPT241 The Study of Political Philosophy: Ancient and Modern Fall 2012**  
[3 Credits; GVPT Majors Only; Prerequisite: GVPT 100]  
**Monday & Wednesday, 2pm-2:50pm, 1400 Marie Mount Hall**

**I. INSTRUCTOR**

Professor Ian Ward  
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**II. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines key continuities and breaks between traditions in ancient and modern political philosophy. Special attention is given to figures addressing a recurring theme in the history of political thought: the relationship between the individual and the community. Authors to be considered include Eric Arthur Blair (a.k.a. George Orwell), Plato, Niccolò Machiavelli, William Shakespeare, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Ralph Waldo Ellison.

The principal goal of the course, aside from the attainment of introductory knowledge of these figures, is the development of two skills essential to serious undergraduate training in Government and Politics: (1) slow, scholarly reading, and (2) clear, analytical writing. In the context of political inquiry, these skills are both foundational and difficult to acquire. The course readings, lectures, assignments and discussion sessions are all chosen and designed with these skills in mind.

**III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Slow, careful reading of all course materials, including this syllabus.**

Regular Attendance at Lectures

Responsible Participation in Discussion Sections: (20% of final course grade)

\*\*Oral Presentations in Discussion Sections: (20% of final course grade)

\*\*Three Short Essays: (1) 3pp, **due October 1, 2012** (10% of final course grade)  
(2) 7pp, **due November 12, 2012** (20% of final course grade)  
(3) 10pp, **due December 14, 2012** (30% of final course grade)

\*\* denotes a "Major Scheduled Grading Event" for the purposes of the University's Medical Excuse Policy. Please see the "Course Policies" section of this syllabus (below).

## 1. Lectures

Regular attendance at lectures is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success in this course. While I do not keep formal attendance records for lectures (given the size of our class, this would take up too much valuable lecture time), all the other requirements of the course (i.e. careful reading of the course materials, responsible participation in discussion sessions, oral presentations, and short essays) presuppose a strong familiarity with what is discussed in lectures **that can only be acquired through regular and attentive attendance**. Without this familiarity, students will not be able to satisfy these requirements or succeed in the course. Formal attendance is taken for discussion sections (see below).

## 2. Discussion Section Participation (20% of final course grade)

The texts we will be reading are intensely demanding in their complexity. In texts of this kind, there is always more going on than can be grasped by a single reader in isolation. Discussion sections are regular occasions for you and your fellow students to work together toward more adequate understanding of the week's readings. This means that, albeit to a lesser degree than in upper-level GVPT seminars, **you are all jointly responsible for helping educate each other about the course material**. In discussion sections, we are not merely judging whether you have done the week's readings, or attended the week's lectures, but also your skill in being peer educators.

Accordingly, students are expected to attend discussion sections regularly, to do the reading carefully in advance, and to participate responsibly. A student who fails to attend section without a legitimate excuse receives a grade of "F" for that session. For information concerning what constitutes a legitimate excuse and associated procedures, please see the "Course Policies" section of this syllabus (below). Attending section without participating counts as borderline performance (= D). The first week's session does not count toward the grade.

Oral contributions in discussion sections will be judged according to the following criteria:

- \* the degree to which they manifest genuine attention to, and understanding of, the material being discussed;
- \* the degree to which they succeed in advancing the discussion by responding meaningfully to what others have said; and
- \* the degree to which they articulate coherent, interesting, thoughtful, plausible, and original claims, questions, and arguments.

To earn an A for this component of the course, a student needs to participate regularly in the discussion and satisfy the above criteria in exceptionally high degree. Regular participation, by itself, does not guarantee a high grade. For example, a student who participates regularly and seems to have read the assigned material, but does not demonstrate a good grasp of the ideas and arguments being discussed, and therefore does not contribute much of value to the discussion, would earn a C for seminar performance. Behavior that is disruptive or disrespectful of other students is considered *de facto* non-attendance (= F), and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

### 3. Oral Presentations (20% of final course grade)

Starting in the second week of class, each discussion section meeting will begin with a 5-10 minute oral presentation addressing the readings for that week. The presenter is expected to articulate a careful and interesting claim about the readings in a way that elicits thoughtful responses from other students. Each student will be responsible for 1 presentation during the term. **Due to scheduling and enrollment constraints, some discussion sections may feature more than one presenter. In such cases, presenters are expected to co-ordinate their efforts beforehand, so as to avoid duplication during group discussion.** The most important criterion for evaluating oral presentations is the **quality of the section discussions they generate.** Generally speaking, presentations that **refer explicitly to specific passages of the text(s) under discussion and raise specific questions about the week's reading** fare better on this score than those that do not. Presentations are also evaluated in accordance with the criteria for oral contributions given above. There is no provision for make-up presentations without a valid, documented excused absence (see section IV below).

### 4. Three Short Essays (worth 10%, 20%, and 30% of the final course grade respectively)

These essays are short, but highly challenging. Each follows the same format:

(1) Approximately two weeks prior to the relevant due date, two highly specific questions about difficult passages from the course reading will be posted on the ELMS course website.

(2) You will choose **one** of these questions and compose an answer that is as complete and precise as possible within the allotted length (**3 pages** for the paper due **October 1**, **7 pages** for the paper due **November 12**, **10 pages** for the paper due **December 14**). These lengths indicate both minimum and maximum constraints, i.e. the essays must be neither shorter nor longer than the relevant page length. **No sources, aside from the course readings and your notes from lecture and discussion section, are to be consulted in the crafting of your essays.** The increasing length and percentage value of each assignment reflects the increasing complexity of the questions you will be asked, as well as your increasing skill in answering them.

The essays have a very specific point: to gauge and develop your ability to grasp nuanced, complex, and multi-layered ideas and to explain them as clearly and precisely as possible. They are not "personal reaction" pieces, research papers, or literature reviews. Instead, they are occasions for you to develop and refine the basic skills presupposed by these more complex forms of writing, which are important components of other GVPT courses. Advice for writing political philosophy essays, including style guidelines and other writing resources, will be made available via the ELMS course site.

All essays must exhibit proper grammar, spelling and punctuation, and be double-spaced with one-inch margins. Sloppy and / or incomplete essays will not be accepted, and will receive a grade of "F." Essays must be submitted, via the ELMS course site, as working electronic files in .docx or .pdf format, by **5:00pm** on the relevant due date. Essays submitted late and attachments that do not open properly will be penalized at the rate of a full letter grade per day (Saturday through Sunday).

## IV. COURSE POLICIES

1. Academic Integrity. **In GVPT 241, matters of academic integrity are taken very seriously.** All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's Code of Academic Integrity, including the Student Honor Pledge, at all times. Suspected violations will be reported to the Student Honor Council (<http://www.shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>). For more information, please see <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii100a.html>. If you have any questions about how the Code applies in the context of this course, or about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to ask your Teaching Assistant or me. You should know that the standard penalty for a student found guilty of academic dishonesty by the Honor Council is a grade of XF for the course.

2. Accommodations Related to a Disability. I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form that has been updated for the Fall 2012 semester. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than September 28, 2012.

3. Medical Excuses. You (student) or a guardian must email me or call me PRIOR to class to inform me that you will not be in attendance due to illness or injury and thus will miss either a lecture or a discussion section. On the very next class (either lecture or discussion) that you are in attendance, you must present me (or your Graduate Teaching Assistant) with a self-signed note for missing one single lecture or discussion section. This note must include the date of illness and a statement that the information you have provided is true. You must also state that if your absence is found to be false, you understand that you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. The statement must be signed and dated. Do understand that only one self-signed note for one class or discussion section's absence will be allowed. The form can be accessed at <http://www.health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/ClassExcuse1011.pdf>

**For illnesses or injuries resulting in (1) extended or non-consecutive absences, (2) an absence on the scheduled date of your oral presentation, or (3) an inability to submit one of your short essays by the relevant due date, I will require a Health Center or medical doctor's health excuse. Both (2) and (3) involve "Major Scheduled Grading Events." If you do not inform me or if you do not present me with timely documentation, you will be given a grade of "F" for the essay or presentation in question.** Note: In the case that you are unable to get a written medical excuse, you may ask your provider for a copy of your medical notes for the specific visit(s) in question.

4. Student Emergencies. Absences resulting from compelling circumstances beyond the student's control will be handled in accordance with the University's Policy on Attendance and Assessment: <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html>. Note that documentation of the relevant circumstances will be required.

5. Religious Observances. Students requesting an excused absence due to a religious observance must provide me with a request, in writing, by September 12, 2012. Requests will be handled in accordance with the University's Policy On Religious Observances: <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html>. Please remember that

accommodations are not made for travel to and from the religious observance.

## 6. Grading Procedures.

Final Grades for GVPT 241 are calculated as follows. You will receive a letter grade for each component of the course. In the calculation of your final grade, letter grades will be converted to the following percentages and applied to each weighted component of the course:

$$\begin{aligned} A+ &= 100, A = 96.9, A- = 93.4, B+ = 89.4, B = 86.9, B- = 83.4, C+ = 79.4, C = 76.9, \\ C- &= 73.4, D+ = 69.4, D = 66.9, D- = 63.4, F = 0 \end{aligned}$$

The total points you accumulate for all the course components will then be added and converted to a letter grade according to the following scale:

$$\begin{aligned} 97 \text{ and above} &= A+; 93.5 - 96.9 = A; 89.5 - 93.4 = A-; 87 - 89.4 = B+; 83.5 - 86.9 = B; \\ 79.5 - 83.4 &= B-; 77 - 79.4 = C+; 73.5 - 76.9 = C; 69.5 - 73.4 = C-; 67 - 69.4 = D+; \\ 63.5 - 66.9 &= D; 59.5 - 63.4 = D-; 59.4 \text{ and below} = F \end{aligned}$$

If you have a concern about your grade for any component of the course, please supply a written explanation of your concern to your teaching assistant, and then meet with your teaching assistant to discuss. If you are not satisfied with your teaching assistant's explanation of the grade, then please supply a written explanation to me, and then meet with me to discuss. There is no provision for "extra credit" or "bonus points" in this course.

7. Course evaluations. Students are encouraged to complete the online evaluation (available at [www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu)). The evaluation site will open on 11/27/2012.

8. Personal Technology Devices. Use of Cellular Telephones, PDAs, etc. in class is strictly prohibited, and is considered disruptive behavior. Laptops and tablets are permitted, but for note-taking only. Use of laptops and tablets in class **for purposes other than note-taking is prohibited considered disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior may be reported to the office of student conduct.**

9. Contacting Your Professor or Teaching Assistant via Email. Email messages to me, or to your teaching assistant will exhibit proper grammar, spelling and punctuation. They are not to be composed in the form of a "text message." It can take up to 24 hours for your TA or me to respond to your message. **This means that, if you have a question concerning work that is coming due, it is your responsibility to ask well ahead of the relevant deadline.**

10. Copyright. Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from me.

11. Emergency Campus Closings. In the event that the University is closed for an emergency or extended period of time, I will communicate to you via email to indicate schedule adjustments due to inclement weather and campus emergencies. Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website <http://www.umd.edu>. The snow phone line is 301-405-SNOW.

## V. COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Required books available for purchase at the University Book Center:

Plato, <i>The Trial and Death of Socrates</i>	(ISBN 0872205541)
Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>	(ISBN 019280426X)
Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>	(ISBN 0872201783)
Rousseau, <i>First and Second Discourses</i>	(ISBN 0312694407)
Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i>	(ISBN 0679732764)

Editions of these works will also be placed on reserve at McKeldin Library. All other required readings (marked with a single asterisk \*) will be available on the Electronic Reserve or Course Documents sections of the ELMS course website.

**The day's required reading must be read prior to class. Students must bring copies of the reading to class. Readings made available by ELMS are to be printed out and brought to class.**

This schedule is approximate; minor changes, if any, will be announced in class or via ELMS.

### Week One

August 29: Course Overview

### Week Two

September 3: Labor Day Holiday – No Class.

September 5: Politics and the English Language

Required Reading: George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language."\*

### Week Three

September 10: The Politics of Piety

Required Reading: Plato, "Euthyphro," from *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

September 12: Philosophy on Trial

Required Reading: Plato, "Apology of Socrates," from *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

### Week Four

September 17: Socrates' Last Days

Required Reading: Plato, "Crito," from *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

**First Essay Questions Posted on ELMS**

September 19: City and Citizen

Required Reading: Plato, "Crito," and "Death Scene From Phaedo," from *The Trial and Death of Socrates*

### Week Five

September 24: *Mini-Lecture and Workshop on Writing Political Philosophy Essays*  
Required Re-Reading: Orwell, "Politics and the English Language."

September 26: The Republic and the Renaissance  
Required Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter and Parts I-IX

### Week Six

October 1: Of Principalities and Princes  
Required Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Parts X-XIX  
**First Essays Due**

October 3: Virtue and Fortune  
Required Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Parts XX-XXVI

### Week Seven

October 8: Our Darker Purpose  
Required Reading: *King Lear*, Act I\*

October 10: Reason Not the Need  
Required Reading: *King Lear*, Acts II-III\*

### Week Eight

October 15: Rule of the Fathers  
Required Reading: *King Lear*, Acts IV-V\*

October 17: The State of Nature (I)  
Required Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I

### Week Nine

October 22: The State of War  
Required Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I

October 24: The Commonwealth  
Required Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II  
**Second Essay Questions Posted on ELMS**

### Week Ten

October 29: Life Under the Leviathan  
Required Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II

October 31: *Mini-Lecture and Workshop: Common Faults of Undergraduate Political Philosophy Essays*

### Week Eleven

November 5: Man is born free...

Required Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*

November 7: ...yet Everywhere He is in Chains.

Required Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*

### Week Twelve

November 12: The Garlands on our Chains

Required Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*

**Second Essays Due**

November 14: The Curse of Conformity

Required Reading: Emerson, *Self-Reliance\**

### Week Thirteen

November 19: Conformity's Aversion (I)

Required Reading: Emerson, *The American Scholar\**

November 21: Conformity's Aversion (II)

Required Reading: Emerson, *The American Scholar\**

### Week Fourteen

November 26: From Democratic Individuality to Democratic Invisibility

Required Reading: Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Introduction, Prologue, and Chs. 1-5

November 28: Invisibility Explored

Required Reading: Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Chs. 6-13

**Third Essay Questions Posted on ELMS**

### Week Fifteen

December 3: The Politics of Democratic Piety

Required Reading: Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Chs. 14-20.

December 5: Democratic Piety (cont'd)

Required Reading: Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Chs. 21-25 and Epilogue

### Week Sixteen

December 10: Course Recap

**Third Essays are due on December 14.**