

Course Syllabus (yet to be finalized)
Summer Seminar: Classics in Histories and Political Philosophy
Hainan University, Haikou, China
June–August, 2004, Haikou

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Course title: Division of Regimes Ancient and Modern

Course description: Aristotle divides political regimes into seven types. This seminar is intended to serve an in-depth inquiry into this classical Aristotelian formulation, its ancient predecessors as well as its modern successors. Attention will be given to the demonstration of the advantage and disadvantage of the various types of regimes and, if possible, to construct, following Plato, an “ideal regime” (πολιτεία ἀριστε). Thirteen key framers in this concern will be read and discussed. Sample questions to be addressed might be as follows: Why such a division? What are their relations with the order of cosmos and soul? What causes the destruction or dissolution of a given political regime, and by what virtues, if any, each type of regime can be preserved? What’re the inner connections among the different types of regime? Can a monarchy be ruled democratically or a democracy be ruled aristocratically, etc? Where, in each type of regime, is the proper seat established for the presence of Sovereign? How does the idea of “mixed regime” appear absurd or sound? …

Selection from Plutarch’s *Vitae Parallelae* will be frequently referred to as historical illustrative examples. Close scrutiny of the texts will be combined with intensive class discussion in order to establish an intimacy with the original texts in question. Weekly two-page essay and a final reflection paper of 10–30 pages are suggested.

The following timetable shows how the class will be hopefully proceed.

1st week
Herodotus, Histories, Book 3.

2nd week

Plato, Republic, Book 9; Laws, Book 3.

3rd week

Aristotle, Politics, Book 4, 5.

4th week

Polybius, Histories, Book 6 (Fr)

5th week

Cicero, Republic, Book 1, 2.

6th week

* Thomas More, Utopia, Part 1.

7th week

* Machiavelli, Il Principe, chapters 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 24.

8th week

Jean Bodin, Les Six Livres de la République, Book 2.

9th week

* Hobbes, Leviathan, chapters 19, 29.

10th week

Spinoza, Tractatus politicus, chapter 6-11.

11th week

Montesquieu, Esprit des Lois, Part 1.

Vico, Nouva Scienza, Book 2, Part 5, and Book 4.

12th week

Rousseau, Du Contract Social, Book 3.

(Nota Bene: The three classes marked by “*”, i.e., those of Thomas More, Nicolo Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes will be lectured jointly with other prospective participants of the Seminar.)