Machiavelli

Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Kendall Hall 411

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Office Hours: Mondays, 1:30-3:15 p.m., Tuesdays, 8:15-10:15 a.m.; and by appointment.

The following books are available at the bookstore and should be purchased by every student enrolled in Politics 720. Translations other than those listed below are not acceptable.


There are a number of secondary works that you may also wish to purchase: Harvey C. Mansfield, Machiavelli’s Virtue (Chicago) and Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders (Chicago), and Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Chicago). You will almost certainly want to secure a used copy of Claude Nicolet, The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome (California). These four works I have also placed on reserve in the college library, along with a number of other books you may wish to consult as we work our way through the reading assigned.

In his various works, Machiavelli makes frequent reference to the history of ancient Rome and to that of his native Florence. If you know very little regarding this history, you will – while
studying Machiavelli – frequently find yourself at a loss. If possible, prior to our first class, you would do well to read quickly the first nine chapters of the Martin volume and the Brucker volume in its entirety. If you find the trajectory followed by Florence intriguing (as you should), you may want to go on and read John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (Blackwell): ISBN-13: 978-1405182423 – with particular reference to Chapters One, Two, Nine, Ten, and Twelve through and Fourteen.

Many of the books to which Machiavelli alludes – such as Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, and the Bible – you will have at least a passing familiarity with. Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) you may never have encountered. For Machiavelli, however, it was arguably fundamental. In the mid-1490s, he went to the trouble of producing a critical edition of that scandalous book, and he knew it almost by heart. It, if possible, you should read it also before the term begins. It repays close attention.

There will be a preliminary examination on Monday, the 5th of October, covering everything assigned to be read prior to that date (including the material from Martin, Brucker, and Lucretius mentioned above), and there will be a final examination, which will be administered in our assigned classroom on the date and at the time assigned by the college. Each student is required to write three typed, double-spaced, 3000-word papers in the course of the term. These should be placed in the pigeonhole on the wall outside my office in Kendall Hall before 9 a.m. on the Fridays of Weeks V, X, and XV. Delivery by e-mail attachment is not acceptable. To avoid difficulties that may arise if a paper is somehow misplaced, students are expected to photocopy their papers before turning them in and to retain a copy for their own records. Paper topics will be assigned at least one week prior to the date each paper is due.

In ordinary circumstances, no incompletes will be given, and no make-up examinations will be administered. Any student found guilty of plagiarizing or of cheating on any examination will be given a failing grade in the course and will be reported to the proper authorities. Such behavior can result in dismissal from the College. It is the student’s responsibility to know and to abide by both the college’s Academic Honor Policy (spelled out in detail in the college catalogue) and the Hillsdale College Honor Code: *A Hillsdale College student is honorable in conduct, honest in word and deed, dutiful in study and service, and respectful of the rights of others. Through education the student rises to self-government.*

Incapacitating illness or serious family problems (such as the sudden death of a close relative) are the only grounds excusing a late paper. I will ask to see written evidence that you were under the care of a physician or the equivalent (such as an obituary). If you cannot complete your work on time, you must contact me before the work is due. Leave a note, e-mail me at paul.rahe@hillsdale.edu, or call 607-2391. Unexcused lateness in completing work will result in a penalty of one-half of a letter grade per day.

This will be a discussion course, not a lecture course. Classroom attendance is mandatory, and late arrival for class will not be tolerated. Each student is expected to have done the assigned reading for each and every class on time and to be ready to discuss in detail the reading assigned. Each student is encouraged to do as much of the optional reading in secondary materials as possible. On days when any of Machiavelli’s works are being discussed, students should bring both *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy* to class. When his *Art of War* is set for discussion, that text should be brought as well. When selections from Machiavelli’s personal correspondence are assigned, the volume *Machiavelli and his Friends* should be brought as well.

To compute the term grade, the instructor will average six grades assigned you – those that you received on each of the two examinations, those that you received on each of your three
papers, and a grade assessed with an eye to your participation in class. Office hours are listed at
the top of the first page of this syllabus. Conferences for other times can be arranged by
appointment with the instructor.

Some of the works listed below will be found on reserve. They will be marked with an
asterisk.
Schedule of Classes

Week I: 31 August - 4 September

M: No Class


Week II: 7-11 September

M: Machiavelli, The Prince XV-XIX (with Documents nos. 6-8)


W: Letters Nos. 11, 31-33, 37, 44, 67, 69, 75, 83, 90, 92, 94, 105, 107, 109, 112-13, 115, 139, 144, 166-67, 169, 178, 181, 184, 191 (with the headnotes for each year and the attendant notes), in Machiavelli and his Friends: Their Personal Correspondence, tr. and ed. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), and Machiavelli, “Sonnets to Giuliano, son of Lorenzo de Medici,” 1513 (PDF).


1. In this connection, one might also want to look at *Nicolai Rubinstein, “The Beginnings of Niccolò Machiavelli’s Career in the Florentine Chancery,” Italian Studies 11 (1956): 72-91.


Week III: 14 - 18 September

**M:** Letters 202-47 (with the attendant headnotes and notes), in *Machiavelli and his Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, tr. and ed. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).

W: Letters 119 and 121 (with the attendant notes), in *Machiavelli and his Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, tr. and ed. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Machiavelli, “Tercets on Ambition,” “Tercets on Ingratitude or Envy,” and “Tercets on Fortune” (PDF); Machiavelli, *The Prince* XX-XXVI (with Documents nos. 1, 9-14) and Discourses on Livy III.3.


Week IV: 21-25 September


**Week V:** 28 September - 2 October


**F:** First Paper Due

**Week VI:** 5-9 October

**M:** Preliminary Examination

**W:** Letters 248-75 (with the attendant headnotes and notes), in *Machiavelli and his Friends: Their Personal Correspondence,* tr. and ed. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Machiavelli, *Discourses* Dedatory Letter, I.Preface, 1; *The Prince* passim (with Documents no. 7: Dedatory Letter to Giovanni Gaddi and 9-14).


Week VII: 12-16 October

**M:** Machiavelli, *Discourses* I.2-8; *The Prince* II.


5. In this connection, see also the *AHR Forum* devoted to “Hans Baron’s Renaissance Humanism,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 107-44.


Week VIII: 19-23 October

M: Machiavelli, Discourses I.16-18; The Prince passim.


Week IX: 26-30 October


**Week X: 2-6 November**

**M:** Machiavelli, *Discourses* I.46-60.
Interpretive Studies: *Harvey C. Mansfield, Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) 139-80

**W:** Machiavelli, “A Provision for Infantry,” 6 December 1506 (PDF); Machiavelli, *The Prince* XII-XIV; Machiavelli, *Discourses* II. Preface; Machiavelli, *Art of War* I-IV.

**F: Second Paper Due**

**Week XI: 9-13 November**

**M:** Machiavelli, *Art of War* V-VII


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Week XII: 16-20 November

M: Machiavelli, Discourses II.6-10.


W: Machiavelli, Discourses II.11-18.


Week XIII: 23-27 November

W: No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week XIV: 30 November - 4 December


Week XV: 7-11 December
M: Machiavelli, *Discourses* III.16-34.

W: Machiavelli, *Discourses* III.35-49; Machiavelli, “A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence” 1520 (PDF)

F: Third Paper Due

Week XVI: 14-18 December
T: Final Examination -- Tuesday, 15 December 2015, 8:00 a.m.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR PAPERS

The following are guidelines that I will follow in grading your papers.

In order to earn an A, a paper has to satisfy all of the following criteria:

A  It must demonstrate a solid understanding of the meaning and significance of the pertinent historical evidence or document(s), a mastery of the arguments advanced in the lectures and discussions and in the reading assigned, and a grasp of other pertinent elements present in the evidence or the text(s) under scrutiny.
It must embody a relevant, coherent, and well-argued response to the material under examination.
It must evidence an understanding of the subtle points in the reading and a sustained effort to think critically about them.
It must demonstrate sensitivity to conceptual nuances and counter-arguments introduced in the reading and discussions.
It must contain very, very few (if any) misspellings, grammatical errors, or other mechanical problems.

Grades lower than an A (90-100) signify a failure to satisfy any one (or more) of the above criteria. Lower grades will be assigned according to the following guidelines (any one of the following will be sufficient reason for assigning the corresponding letter grade or number grade within the range designated): B (80-90), C (70-80), D (60-70), F (under 60).

B  No major misunderstanding of the reading, but some minor misunderstandings: vagueness, imprecision, minor errors of interpretation, insufficiently critical treatment of the evidence, etc.
   Some weakness in the response: dogmatic or uncritical assertion, begging the question, blurring some distinctions, irrelevancy, invalidity, inconsistency, missing the point slightly, considering only weak counter-arguments.
   Understood the main points of the reading, but evidenced only adequate effort in thinking critically about them. Some insensitivity to issues raised in the readings. More than one or two misspellings, grammatical errors, or other mechanical problems. Clearly did the reading, but not with full attention and care.

C  Some major misunderstandings of the claims, arguments, or conceptual distinctions advanced in the reading or discussion.
   A response that is in significant ways irrelevant, incoherent, or poorly argued.
   Attributing to the authors claims they explicitly deny, or which contradict other of their views. Attributing to authors conclusions that do not follow from their views.
Failure to give a critical response: failing to consider counter-arguments found in the readings; mere summary or description instead of analysis; assertion instead of argument; uncritical assessment of evidence.
Quite a number of misspellings, grammatical errors, or other mechanical problems.
One or more sentences that are incomprehensible as written.
Unclear how much work was put into the assignment, or whether all of the reading was completed. May have just picked up arguments from class and a superficial reading.

D  Partial failure to address the requirements of the assignment.
Unacceptable brevity.
Little awareness demonstrated of the structure and significance of the major arguments contained in the reading.
Partial ignorance of the pertinent evidence.
Inadequate understanding of the pertinent evidence.
An unacceptable number of misspellings, grammatical errors, or other mechanical problems.
An unacceptable number of sentences that are incomprehensible as written.
Clearly an inadequate amount of effort put into the assignment.

F  More or less complete failure to address the requirements of the assignment.
Gross ignorance of the pertinent evidence.
Completely uncritical treatment of the evidence.
Virtually no awareness demonstrated of the structure and significance of the major arguments contained in the reading.
Insulting brevity.
An insulting number of misspellings, grammatical errors, or other mechanical problems.
Little or no genuine effort put into the assignment.

A number grade of “0” will be given to papers that are not handed in at all.

F for course: Plagiarized work.