

Machiavelli and Interpretation

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| POLI 561 Fall 2014 422 FERRIER M 11:35-14:25 | Professor Yves Winter email: yves.winter@mcgill.ca twitter: @whywinter Office: 418 Ferrier Office hours: W 2-4 pm & by appt |
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Description

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) is one of the most controversial and idiosyncratic thinkers in the tradition of European political theory. His political and historical works emerged during the tumultuous Italian crises of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which Machiavelli observed not only from the vantage point of a writer and historian but also as secretary and ambassador in the Florentine chancery. His texts have given rise to widely divergent interpretations: he is viewed by some as the first political scientist, a theorist of the modern state and one of the founder of political modernity, and he is regarded by others as a medieval mind, ensconced in cosmological mythology and nostalgic attachments to ancient Rome. Some regard him as a dispassionate and objective political realist while others view him as a fervent Italian patriot; some see him as a theorist of the absolutist state or even an adviser to tyrants; for others he was an advocate of republican freedom, participatory government, equality, revolutionary politics, and democracy.

How can a body of work give rise to such disparate and incompatible interpretations? In this seminar, we will address this question via an in-depth study of Machiavelli's major political works and the main strands of interpretation. In our assessment of the various interpretive traditions, we will pay special attention to the methods deployed as well as to the historical, philosophical, and literary presuppositions behind each. By juxtaposing historical, philosophical, and interpretive methods through which texts and ideas are confronted and understood, we will be able to raise fundamental conceptual and methodological questions about political theory and the history of political thought qua modes of inquiry.

Prerequisites & Restrictions

This is an advanced seminar open to graduate students, final year honours students, and other advanced undergraduates with the permission of the instructor. Students must have taken at least one upper-level course in political theory or political philosophy.

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase from **The Word Bookstore, 469 Milton Street** (cash or cheque only). They will also be on reserve in the Humanities & Social Sciences Library.

Niccolò Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998

Niccolò Machiavelli. *Discourses on Livy*. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

All other readings (starred *) will be available on myCourses.

Students are encouraged to read texts in the original languages. Contact me for bibliographic information.

Assignments and Grades

Written assignments for this course will consist of (i) weekly short reflection papers; (ii) a seminar paper proposal; and (iii) a 15-20 pp. seminar paper due at the end of the semester.

Further instructions for both paper outlines and papers will be made available later in the course.

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. They are to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class. Late papers will be docked one third of a letter grade (5 percentage points) for every day late, including weekends. Extensions are available only for serious and documented reasons, and they must be requested ahead of time. No extensions will be granted on (or after) an assignment's due date. Do not send assignments via email unless otherwise instructed.

Your written work will be graded on originality, reasoning and argument, organization, clarity of exposition, and style. Essays will be graded out of 100; a detailed grading rubric will be posted on myCourses.

Final grades are calculated according to the following schedule. Students must receive a passing grade (D) in each of the following four grade categories to receive a passing grade for the course.

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| Reflection papers | 20% |
| Paper proposal | 10% |
| Seminar paper | 50% |
| Class participation | 20% |

Classroom Policies

As this is a seminar, **attendance** is critical. Students with three or more absences should not expect a passing grade.

You are responsible for having read the assigned texts prior to the class meeting. Prepare for class by taking notes and by thinking about questions, ideas, or problems that arise in your reading. Be sure to bring books and hard copy printouts of readings to class.

McGill University values **academic integrity**. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#). Please note that I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously, and your work will be reviewed for potential plagiarism issues by means of text-matching software.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant-e a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

[Research](#) shows that students who take notes by hand significantly outperform students who take notes on **mobile computing devices** (even when the devices are offline and used exclusively for note-taking). For your own educational benefit, While laptops and tablets are not prohibited in this class, I strongly urge you to leave them at home or stowed away in your bags. Needless to say, any use of electronic equipment may only be used for note-taking. Any other use (including e-mail, web surfing, games, chat, messaging, and so on) is distracting and disruptive to fellow students and is not permitted during class time.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (514)398-6009.

Class Schedule

- Sep 8 Introduction: Interpretation, Textualism and Contextualism
 Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* pp. 9-77 *
 Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, pp. 22-37 *
 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" *
 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, pp. 26-82 *
 Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, pp. 3-26 *
- Sep 15 *The Prince*
 Letter to Vettori
 Recommended: Corrado Vivanti, *Niccolò Machiavelli: An Intellectual Biography*
- Sep 22 *The Prince* [cont.]
 The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca *
 Mandragola *
 Hans Baron "Machiavelli: The Republican Citizen and the Author of 'the Prince'." *
 Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, pp. 113-138 *
 Mary Dietz, "Trapping The Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception" *
 Recommended: Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*
- Sep 29 *Discourses on Livy*, book I: preface, chapters 1-15
 Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, books I-II *
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of The Social Contract*, II.7-8; III.10 *
 Recommended: Polybius, *Histories*, book VI
- Oct 6 *Discourses on Livy*, book I: chapters 16-45
 Politics and the Public:
 Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli" *
 Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, pp. 3-200 *
 John Najemy, "Society, Class, and State in the Discourses on Livy"*
- Oct 13 Thanksgiving - No Class
- Oct 20 *Discourses on Livy*, book II
 Republican Liberty ("Cambridge School"):
 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 1-9; 66-80; 156-218 *
 Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli on *virtù* and the Maintenance of Liberty" *
 Quentin Skinner, "The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty" *
 Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and the Pre-Humanist Origins of Republican Ideas" *
- Oct 27 *Discourses on Livy*, book III
 Straussian Textualism:
 Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 9-53; 174-299 *
 Harvey Mansfield, "Machiavelli's Virtue" *
 Recommended: Paul Rahe, "Situating Machiavelli" *

- Nov 3 The Democratic Machiavelli
 Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, pp. 175-213 *
 Claude Lefort, *Machiavelli in the Making*, pp. 220-279 *
 John McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, pp. vii-138 *
 Recommended: Miguel Vatter, *Between Form and Event*
- Nov 10 Marxist interpretations
 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 125-185; 219-223; 242-253*
 Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, pp. 3-52; 81-103 *
 Recommended: Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies*, pp. 37-97
- Nov 17 Machiavelli and Gender
 Hanna Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman*, pp. 138-160; 285-327 *
 Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics*, pp. 71-123 *
 Arlene Saxonhouse, "Niccolò Machiavelli: Women as Men, Men as Women, and the Ambiguity of Sex" *
 Jane S. Jaquette, "Rethinking Machiavelli: Feminism and Citizenship" *
 Paper proposals due
- Nov 24 Violence, Militarism and Empire
 Mikael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, pp. 38-112 *
 Mark Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli*, pp. 219-257 *
 Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*, pp. 86-134 *
- Dec 1 Machiavelli's Rhetoric
 Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli*, pp. 73-113 *
 Victoria Kahn, "Virtù and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli's Prince" *
 Nancy Struever, *Theory as Practice*, pp. 147-181 *
 Wayne Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men*, pp. 188-227 *
 Virginia Cox, "Rhetoric and Ethics in Machiavelli" *
- Dec 4 [!] Review
 Seminar papers due in class

Machiavelli's Key Sources and Interlocutors

Aristotle. *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*. Translated by Steven Everson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship in Political Writings*. Translated by R.W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On the Commonwealth and on the Laws*. Translated by James E. G. Zetzel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Duties*. Translated by M. T. Griffin, and E. M. Atkins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *De Oratore*. Translated by with an introduction by H. Rackham E. W. Sutton. 2 vols. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Erasmus. *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Translated by Lisa Jardine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Guicciardini, Francesco. *The History of Florence*. Translated by Mario Dommandi. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Guicciardini, Francesco. *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*. Translated by Alison Brown. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Guicciardini, Francesco. "Considerations of the Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli." In *The Sweetness of Power: Machiavelli's Discourses and Guicciardini's Considerations*, edited by James B. Atkinson, and David Sices, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Library, 2007.

Livy, Titus. *The Early History of Rome*. Translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt. London: Penguin, 2002. -- Books I-V

Livy, Titus. *Rome and Italy*. Translated by Betty Radice. London: Penguin, 1982. -- Books VI-X

Livy, Titus. *The War With Hannibal*. Translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt. London: Penguin, 1972. -- Books XXI-XXX

Livy, Titus. *Rome and the Mediterranean*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. London: Penguin, 1976. -- Books XXXI-XLV

Polybius. *The Histories*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Savonarola, Girolamo. "Treatise on the Rule and Government of the City of Florence." In *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola : Religion and Politics, 1490-1498*, edited by Anne Pastore Passaro Borelli, Maria C., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Tacitus, Cornelius. *The Annals*. Translated by J. C. Yardley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Secondary Literature

Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence. Translated by James B. Atkinson, and David Sices. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Albertini, Rudolf von. *Das florentinische Staatsbewußtsein im Übergang von der Republik zum Prinzipat*. Bern: Francke Verlag, 1955.

Althusser, Louis. *Machiavelli and Us*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 1999.

- Anglo, Sydney. *Machiavelli--the First Century: Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Baron, Hans. *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Baron, Hans. "The Principe and the Puzzle of the Date of Chapter 26." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 21 (1991):
- Benner, Erica. *Machiavelli's Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Bock, Gisela, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli, (eds.) *Machiavelli and Republicanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Translated by S.G.C. Middlemore. London and New York: Penguin, 1990.
- Chabod, Federico. *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*. Translated by David Moore. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.
- Coby, J. Patrick. *Machiavelli's Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses on Livy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999.
- de Grazia, Sebastian. *Machiavelli in Hell*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Del Lucchese, Filippo. *Conflict, Power, and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza*. London and New York: Continuum, 2009.
- Falco, Maria J., (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Machiavelli*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.
- Fontana, Benedetto. *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Gilbert, Felix. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Hankins, James, (ed.) *Renaissance Civic Humanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hörnqvist, Mikael. *Machiavelli and Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Hulliung, Mark. *Citizen Machiavelli*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Kahn, Victoria. *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Lefort, Claude. *Machiavelli in the Making*. Translated by Michael B. Smith. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012.
- Mansfield, Harvey C. *Machiavelli's Virtue*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Mansfield, Harvey C. *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- McCormick, John P. *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Najemy, John M., (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Parel, Anthony. *The Machiavellian Cosmos*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

- Pettit, Philip. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Pitkin, Hanna F. *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.
- Rahe, Paul A. *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory Under the English Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Rebhorn, Wayne A. *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Rubinstein, Nicolai. *The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434-1494)*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Sasso, Gennaro. *Niccolò Machiavelli: storia del suo pensiero politico*. Naples: Istituto italiano per gli studi storici, 1958.
- Sasso, Gennaro. *Machiavelli e gli antichi e altri saggi*. 3 vols. Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1986.
- Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Visions of Politics: Renaissance Virtues*. Vol. 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Sullivan, Vickie B. *Machiavelli's Three Romes: Religion, Human Liberty and Politics Reformed*. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996.
- Vatter, Miguel E. *Between Form and Event: Machiavelli's Theory of Political Freedom*. Dordrecht; Boston, MA: Kluwer, 2000 (reprinted: Fordham University Press, 2014)
- Viroli, Maurizio. *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics, 1250-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Viroli, Maurizio. *Machiavelli*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Viroli, Maurizio. *Niccolò's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*. Translated by Anthony Shugaar. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2000.
- Vivanti, Corrado. *Niccolò Machiavelli: An Intellectual Biography*. Translated by Simon MacMichael. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Zuckert, Catherine. "The Life of Castruccio Castracani: Machiavelli as Literary Artist, Historian, Teacher, and Philosopher." *History of Political Thought* 31, no. 4 (2010): 577-603.
- Zuckert, Catherine. "Machiavelli's Democratic Republic." *History of Political Thought* 35, no. 2 (2014): 262-94.