1. Introduction to the History of Political Thought Papers:

For several decades now, Cambridge has been an international centre for teaching and research on the history of political thought, a subject which has formed a substantial component of the undergraduate degrees in both History and Politics. On the Politics side, there is a widespread view among those who teach the subject here that the study of political ideas in their historical contexts offers an invaluable training for thinking critically and flexibly about politics more generally.

Much of the teaching for this paper is organised by the History Faculty. It is responsible for the production of the reading lists, and will have arranged the lectures that will be delivered throughout the academic year. Sometimes Politics students feel intimidated by the lectures—they worry that they don’t know enough about the relevant ancient, mediaeval, and early modern history, for example, and they come to believe that the History students are better placed than they are to benefit from what’s being said. But if you have thoughts like this, it’s worth exploring the other side of the coin. It’s true that Historians may initially be more familiar with some aspects of the subject than Politics students. But Politics students (especially if they have taken the Part One paper) usually have considerably more experience at handling political argument at a decent level of sophistication by the time they come to study for this paper, and that gives them a very useful platform on which to build their engagement with the syllabus here—since taking political argument seriously is ultimately what this paper is about.

2. Introduction to the Period:

This paper spans the history of western political reflection from the city states of ancient Greece to seventeenth-century argument about natural freedom, international law, natural rights, and their implications for political existence. It offers the chance to investigate ancient conceptions of political organization, human nature, virtue, and slavery, in their own time and place as well as under the later impact of Christianity in the dramatic dialogue between the Church and the Roman
The paper then explores the afterlife and seemingly inexhaustible powers of these ancient texts to stimulate and structure political thinking in later centuries. Aristotle’s works, Roman philosophy, and Roman law all re-surfaced and were put to work in the Latin West in medieval debates on the relationship between the Church and other powers, the constitutional structure of the Church, kingdoms and cities. It covers humanist responses to the classical past and to classical conceptions of virtue in the political thought of Machiavelli and others, the convergence during the Reformation of various traditions in the Calvinist case for armed resistance to an unjust ruler, and moves beyond Europe to examine the theological and legal analysis of the legitimacy of European conquests in the New World.

Like POL8, POL7 is divided into two parts. Section A is devoted to a close contextual reading of the most important texts by those thinkers universally acknowledged as indispensable for an understanding of western political thought: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, More, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. Section B is organized around groups of texts which are historically or thematically linked. Some belong together because they were written as contributions to the same controversy, others were separated by several centuries but belong to the same tradition of commentary and reflection on ancient authorities. The paper has been organized to bring out not merely the contrasts but also the continuities and similarities between its component parts, in many of which the same conceptual languages, analytical tools and pivotal terms are at work. You are encouraged to cross the lines dividing these themes and so to appreciate the fascinating ways in which thinkers remained indebted to enduring yet fluid traditions of enquiry which they re-interpreted, subverted, and moulded into new forms under pressure of new problems.

3. How to study for this paper

**Lectures:** Because the material to be covered spans a wide chronological and thematic range, and also because many students will not have studied the history of political thought before, a comprehensive array of lectures is offered. This need not cause you alarm since you are not required or expected to attend them all—but it is worth appreciating that the traditions of political thought covered in POL7 are both cumulative and interlinked, so, even if a lecture is not directly on a topic you are studying, that does not mean it will not help you to understand it. (Do bear in mind, too, that exam questions are proposed by the lecturers.)

Lecturers are encouraged to place their outlines, bibliographies and other material on the paper’s Moodle site in advance of the lecture—this will be the History Part I Paper 19 Moodle site. Your ID will be added to the list of site users by the course organiser at the start of the academic year, based on information received from the administrative offices of History and POLIS. If you have been omitted, you should contact the course organiser.

**Supervisions:** For this paper, the norm is to have six paired supervisions for the paper spread over the Michaelmas and Lent terms. In these supervisions, you should cover six of the twenty-one named authors (section A) and historical topics (section B) that make up the syllabus, in preparation for answering three questions in the examination. In light of the way in which the exam paper is constructed, it is most common to study four authors and two historical topics. Students often comment that they need to do more reading to get on top of the historical topics, so please organise your time so you are able to cover enough material when you are preparing your essays. What you need to do, therefore, is to construct, in conjunction with your supervisor and your supervision partner, a suitable intellectual pathway through this paper. (Some suggestions for what these might be follow in §5 below.)
4. Structure of the Paper

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A focuses on some of the most prominent political thinkers of the period, and you will study their major texts in depth. Section B offers a range of more thematic or historical topics, for which you will be expected to read across a range of primary texts, and reflect on the broader problems of historical and philosophical interpretation that confront historians of political thought and political theorists in studying this period. You will need to cover at least one topic from each section in the exam, but the precise balance you strike between the two sections is a matter for you to decide with your supervisor and supervision partner (although most students prefer to take a majority of their topics from Section A).

SECTION A

1. Plato
2. Aristotle
3. Augustine
4. Aquinas
5. More
6. Machiavelli
7. Hobbes
8. Locke
SECTION B

9. Greek democracy and its critics
10. Roman political thought from the republic to the principate
11. Early Christian political thought
12. Temporal and spiritual in medieval political thought
13. The medieval reception of classical political thought
14. Argument from Roman law in political thought, 12th -16th centuries
15. Renaissance humanist political thought
16. Obedience and resistance in Reformation political thought
17. Reason of state
18. Sovereignty
19. The origins of international law
20. The political and religious thought of the British revolutions
21. Toleration in the later 17th century
5. Some possible pathways through this paper (indicative/illustrative only)

The following page indicates some possible pathways through the paper. It is in no sense meant to be directive, simply illustrative. Many other combinations are possible, and you should discuss your options with your supervisor and supervision partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Political Thought</th>
<th>Early Modern Political Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B9. Greek democracy and its critics</td>
<td>B20. The British revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3. Augustine</td>
<td>A8. Locke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B21. Toleration in the later C17th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then either B13. The medieval reception of classical political thought, or A4. Aquinas, or A6. Machiavelli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediaeval Political Thought</th>
<th>Religion and Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B11. Early Christian political thought</td>
<td>A3. Augustine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3. Augustine</td>
<td>A4. Aquinas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4. Aquinas</td>
<td>B12. Temporal and spiritual in medieval political thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12. Temporal and spiritual in medieval political thought</td>
<td>B16. Obedience and resistance in Reformation political thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B13. The medieval reception of classical political thought</td>
<td>B21. Toleration in the later C17th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundations of Modern Political Thought</th>
<th>The Legacy of Rome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A6. Machiavelli</td>
<td>B10. Roman political thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B17. Reason of state</td>
<td>A3. Augustine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Politics / Natural Law</th>
<th>‘Great Books’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B18. Sovereignty</td>
<td>B10. Roman political thought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Lectures

For guidance as to which lectures will be most relevant to your course of studies, you are advised to get in touch with your supervisor as early as possible in Michaelmas term.

All lectures will be in person unless otherwise stated and unless University guidelines change

Michaelmas Term

Introductory Session: An introductory session for HSPS students taking POL7 and POL8 will be held at noon on Thursday 7th October with Dr Christopher Brooke and Dr Tom Hopkins in Lady Mitchell Hall.

Apart from the Introductory Session, all POL7 lectures in Michaelmas Term will take place in Room 3 of the History Faculty.

DR M. RYAN
Romans and Christians. (Four lectures, weeks 1-4) W. 9

DR M. RYAN
Spiritual and temporal powers in medieval political thought. (Four lectures, weeks 5-8) W. 9

DR M. RYAN
Plato’s Republic.  
(Four lectures, weeks 1-4) M. 9

DR R. SERJEANTSON
Machiavelli, More and Renaissance Humanism.  
(Four lectures, weeks 1-4) Tu. 9

DR R. SERJEANTSON
Religion and revolution from the Civil Wars to Locke.  
(Four lectures, weeks 5-8) Tu. 9

DR A. WOODHOUSE
Reason of state  
(Two lectures, weeks 5-6) M. 9

Lent Term

[Lectures will take place in the Faculty of History.]

Lent Term
PROF. A. BRETT
Aristotle, Rome and the medieval reception of classical thought. (Six lectures, weeks 1-6) Tu. 9

PROF. A. BRETT
Hobbes and early seventeenth-century political thought (Four lectures, weeks 1-4), M. 9
PROF. A. BRETT
Sovereignty, reason of state and the origins of international law (Four lectures, weeks 5-8) M. 9

DR M. RYAN
Roman law in medieval and renaissance political thought (Four lectures, weeks 1-4) W. 9

DR M. RYAN
Calvinist resistance theory (Four lectures, weeks 5-8) W. 9

DR A. WOODHOUSE
Reason of state (two lectures, weeks 5-6) Tu. 9

7. The Examination

POL7 is marked by examiners appointed by POLIS; students taking the History versions of the paper will sit the same exams, but they will be marked by examiners from the History Faculty.

POLIS Examiners’ reports for the last few years will be found in the Appendix to this course guide (from page 45), which also gives information about how to access past papers.

Candidates can expect that a question will be set on each of the prescribed authors in Section A and topics in Section B. But you should be aware that the guarantee of a question on each author and topic does not mean that examiners will set lowest common denominator, generic questions, open to a pre-prepared answer. They are much more likely to ask specific questions, approaching the author/topic from a particular perspective. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to prepare more than the minimum of required authors and topics.

The examination rubric is: Answer three questions, at least one from each section.
(Overlap between answers must be avoided.)

SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER

Answer three questions, at least one from each section.

SECTION A

1. How successfully did Plato accommodate different conceptions of happiness in Republic?

2. Was Aristotle’s account of constitutions and constitutional change determined by his theory of justice?

3. What role did the concept of nature play in Augustine’s political thought?

4. ‘In the law of Christ, kings must be subject to priests’ [AQUINAS, De regimine principum, chapter III]. What implications does this have for Aquinas’ broader political theory?
5. Do you agree that it was More’s intention to portray the Utopians as living a perfectly virtuous and hence a truly Christian life?

6. Assess the role of the common good in Machiavelli’s political thought.

7. Does Hobbes suggest that there are limits to the duties which a subject may owe the sovereign?

8. ‘In his account of tyranny and its remedy, Locke regards the ruler and not the people as engaging in rebellion.’ Is this a fair view of Locke’s meaning?

SECTION B

9. What risks to the polis did Greek democracy represent in the eyes of its critics?

10. How did Roman thinkers react to the collapse of the republic?

11. On what grounds did different early Christian thinkers affirm and reject civic duty?

12. Why did it take opponents of papal power so long to formulate an articulate defence of their position?

13. What room did medieval authors leave for the classical citizen?

14. ‘Public law is that which relates to the general condition of the Roman Empire’ (Ulpian, Digest 1.1.1). Discuss.

15. Are the political differences between renaissance humanists reducible to advocacy of republican as opposed to advocacy of princely government?

16. What was the importance of natural law and natural reason in resistance theory towards the end of the sixteenth century?

17. What if anything distinguished reason of state from Machiavellianism?

18. What impact did individualism have on theories of sovereignty?

19. How respectful of the autonomy of states were early international law theorists?

20. How useful a category is ‘republicanism’ for understanding the political thought of the British Civil Wars?

21. Why were the leading advocates of toleration all Protestants?
8. Reading Lists

A1 PLATO

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Set text:


The translations listed above are not available in digital editions through the UL. The library has available the two-volume Loeb edition, ed. by C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy, (2013) (E); or the nineteenth-century translation by B. Jowett, (3rd. ed., 1888) (E)

Secondary reading:

Abbreviation:

Suggested secondary reading:
C. Farrar, The Origins of Democratic Thinking (1988), ch. 7 (E)
*M. Lane, ‘Socrates and Plato: an introduction’, in CHGRPT, ch. 8 (E)
______, Greek and Roman Political Ideas (Pelican 2014); available online in its American edition under the title, The Birth of Politics: Eight Greek and Roman political ideas and why they matter, (2015) (E)
C.J Rowe, Plato (1984)
*M. Schofield, ‘Approaching the Republic’, in CHGRPT, ch. 10 (E)
*B. Williams, ‘The analogy of city and soul in Plato’s Republic’ in E.N. Lee, ed., Exegesis and Argument (1973); [in Classics Faculty Library]

Further secondary reading:


M. Lane, Plato’s Progeny: How Socrates and Plato Still Captivate the Modern Mind (2001) (E)


A.W. Nightingale, Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy (2004), chs 3, 4 (E)

M.C. Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness (1986), ch. 5

C.D.C. Reeve, Philosopher Kings (1988)

M. Schofield, Plato (Oxford 2006)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

Is Plato’s ideal city best seen as an attempt to satisfy the requirements of human nature? (2022)

Is Plato’s project in Republic utopian? (2021)

Do Plato’s political recommendations satisfy the requirements of human psychology as identified in Republic? (2020)

How important is the city in Plato’s attempt to demonstrate that the lives of the just are happier than the lives of the unjust? (2019)

‘Isn’t it appropriate for the rational element to rule, because it is wise and takes thought for the entire soul...?’ [PLATO, Republic, Book IV]. Discuss. (2018)

‘Plato’s Republic is centrally about the construction of philosophy, rather than the construction of the city or the soul.’ Discuss. (2017)

‘There are three primary types of people: philosophic, victory-loving, and money-loving’ [PLATO, Republic, Book IX]. Can Plato’s ideal city satisfy everyone? (2016)

A2 ARISTOTLE

(E) = Available via iDiscover

(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Set texts:


These editions are not available digitally from the UL, but see Aristotle’s Politics: Writings from the Complete Works: Politics, Economics, Constitution of Athens (2016), ed. by J. Barnes and M. Lane (2016) (E)

These editions are not available from the UL, but see *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by H. Rackham, rev. ed, (2014) (E). Book 1 of Crisp’s 2000 edition is available on Moodle (M).

**Secondary reading:**

**Abbreviations:**


**Suggested secondary reading:**


*J. Lear, Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (1988) (E)


M.C. Nussbaum, ‘Shame, separateness, and political unity: Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’, in Rorty

*J. Ober, Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (1998), chs 1, 6 (E)

*J. Roberts, ‘Justice and the polis’, in CHGRPT, pp. 344-65 (E)

*C. Rowe, ‘Aristotelian constitutions’, in CHGRPT, pp. 366-89 (E)

M. Schofield, ‘Equality and hierarchy in Aristotle’s thought’, in his *Saving the City* (1999), ch. 6


**Further secondary reading:**


M.F. Burnyeat, ‘Aristotle on learning to be good’, in Rorty, ch. 5


D. Keyt, ‘Three basic theorems in Aristotle’s Politics’, in Keyt & Miller

W. Kullmann, ‘Man as a political animal in Aristotle’, in Keyt & Miller


F.D. Miller, Jr, ‘Naturalism’, in CHGRPT, pp. 321-42 (E)


W.R. Newell, ‘Superlative virtue: the problem of monarchy in Aristotle’s Politics’, in Lord & O’Connor


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

Does Aristotle have an answer to his own question, whether the best law or the best man should rule? (2022)

‘The good legislator and true statesman ought to be acquainted not only with the best in an unqualified sense, but also with the best in the circumstances’ [ARISTOTLE, Politics, Book IV]. How does the Aristotelian political scientist think about the difference between the two? (2021)

‘We should consider not only what form of government is best, but also what is possible and what is easily attainable by all’ [ARISTOTLE, Politics, Book IV]. What impact did this insight have on the rest of Aristotle’s political thought? (2020)

What was Aristotle’s concept of a constitution (politeia), and what role did it play in his political thought? (2019)

What importance does Aristotle attach to equality? (2018)

How did Aristotle analyse and solve the problem of political division? (2017)

‘A city [polis] is made up not only of a plurality, but also of men who are different in kind’ [ARISTOTLE, The Politics, Book II]. Comment. (2016)

**A3 AUGUSTINE**

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Set text:


These editions are not available in digital editions from the UL. The library has available, via Project Gutenberg, the two-volume edition translated by M. Dods (1871) (E).

Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:
* R.A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine (1970) (E)


*J. Wetzel ed., Augustine’s ‘City of God’: A critical guide (Cambridge 2012) (E)

Further secondary reading:
P.D. Bathory, Political Theory as Public Confession: the Social and Political Thought of St Augustine of Hippo (1981)

H.N. Baynes, The Political Ideas of St Augustine’s ‘De Civitate Dei’ (1962)
———, Augustine of Hippo (1967)
H. Chadwick, The Early Church (1967), ch. 15
———, Augustine (1986) (E)

D. Earl, The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome (1967), ch. 6

J.N. Figgis, The Political Aspects of St Augustine’s ‘City of God’ (1921)
P. Garnsey, Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine, chs 13-14

———, ‘The influence of Saint Augustine on early medieval political theory’, (E)
Augustinian Studies, 12 (1981), 1-10 (E)


P. Ramsey, ‘The just war according to St Augustine’ in J.B. Elshtain, ed., Just War Theory (1992)
J. Rist, Augustine (1994) (E)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

‘Augustine provided a new rationale for human community.’ Discuss. (2022)

What was the importance of order in Augustine’s political thought? (2021)

How did Augustine’s conception of a city (civitas) serve his purposes in The City of God? (2020)

What was the role of love in Augustine’s political thought? (2019)

‘There is nothing so sociable by nature and anti-social by corruption as man.’ What makes political life possible for Augustine? (2018)

Why did Augustine think that fallen human beings were characterised by a ‘lust for domination’, and what were the consequences of this for human social and political life? (2017)

What are the implications for Augustine’s political theory of his conviction that ‘true justice is found only in that commonwealth whose founder and ruler is Christ’ [AUGUSTINE, The City of God, Book II]? (2016)

**A4 AQUINAS**

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Secondary reading:

Abbreviation:

Suggested secondary reading:
J. Barnes, ‘The just war’, in CHLMP, ch. 41 (E)
*J.P. Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought* 300-1450 (1996), ch. 3 (E)
J. Coleman, *A History of Political Thought: From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (2000), ch. 2
M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle and the promise of the common good* (Cambridge 2008) (E)
*D.E. Luscombe, ‘Natural morality and natural law’, in CHLMP, ch. 37 (E)
* — — —, ‘The state of nature and the origin of the state’, in CHLMP, ch. 40 (E)

Further secondary reading:
A. Black, *Political Thought in Europe* 1250-1450 (1992), ch. 1 (E)
L.P. Fitzgerald, ‘St Thomas Aquinas and the two powers’, *Angelicum*, 56 (1979), 515-56
———, *A History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (1955)
Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

‘Natural law is only one aspect of a broader argument from nature in the political thought of Thomas Aquinas.’ Discuss. (2022)

What was the relationship between the common good and the individual good in Aquinas’s political thought? (2021)

What were the limits of political life according to Aquinas? (2020)

What value did Thomas Aquinas attribute to political life? (2019)

‘The secular power is subject to the spiritual power as the body is to the soul.’ Should we be surprised by Aquinas’ statement? (2018)

What were the ends of law in the political thought of Thomas Aquinas? (2017)

What was the role of nature in Thomas Aquinas’s political theory? (2016)

A5 MORE

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Set text:


This edition is not available in digital form from the UL. There are a number of digital editions available, including the edition in the collection, More, Utopia; Bacon, New Atlantis; Neville, The Isle of Pines, ed. by S. Bruce, (1999) (E)

Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:

Further secondary reading:
A. Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence* (1982), ch. 2
———, *'Utopia': An Elusive Vision* (1993)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

Does the ‘fairness’ that is identified by Raphael Hythloday as a key quality of the Utopian commonwealth imply it should be regarded as a democracy? (2022)

Does More’s *Utopia* make good on its paradoxical claim that although no one there owns anything, everyone is rich? (2021)

How far is Utopia’s ‘equal and just distribution of goods’ the expression of a democratic ideal? (2020)

Are the politics of the ‘new island’ of Utopia as virtuous as Raphael Hythloday suggests? (2019)

What answers does More’s Utopia offer to the question of the best form of government? (2018)

What is the significance of More’s suggestion that Utopia might represent ‘The best state of the commonwealth’? (2017)

To what extent should we regard Thomas More’s Utopia as exposing the perils of hereditary monarchy? (2016)
A6 MACHIAVELLI

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Set texts:


Secondary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:

H. Baron, ‘Machiavelli the republican citizen and author of The Prince’, in Baron, In Search of Florentine Humanism (2 vols; 1988), vol. II (E)

*F. Gilbert, Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Italy (1984 edn) (E)


———, ‘The theme of gloria in Machiavelli’, Renaissance Quarterly, 30 (1977), 588-631


* ———, ‘Machiavelli’s Discorsi and the pre-humanist origin of republican ideas’, in Bock, ch. 6 (E)

* ———, ‘Machiavelli on the maintenance of liberty’, Politics, 18 (1983), 3-15 (E); rev. in Skinner, Visions of Politics (3 vols; 2002), vol. II: Renaissance Virtues, ch. 6 (E)

*P. Stacey, Roman monarchy and the renaissance prince (Cambridge 2007) (E)

*M. Viroli, ‘Machiavelli and the republican idea of politics’, in Bock, ch. 7 (E)

* ———, Machiavelli (1998) (E)

Further secondary reading:


M. Hörnqvist, Machiavelli and Empire (2005), chs 2-4 (E)


H. Pitkin, Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli (1984)

J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment (1975; reissue with new postscript 2003), esp. pt II (E)

N. Rubinstein, ‘Machiavelli and Florentine republican experience’, in Bock, ch. 1 (E)
D.J. Wilcox, The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the 15th Century (1969)
M. Viroli, From Politics to Reason of State (1992) (E)

_Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):_

What is the significance of Machiavelli’s claim, in his Discourses on Livy, that the ancient Romans were more virtuous than they were fortunate? (2022)

Do the arguments of Machiavelli’s Discourses imply that he rejected the teachings of The Prince? (2021)

What importance does Machiavelli attribute to law? (2020)

What best explains Machiavelli’s insistence that both principalities and republics should look to antiquity for political examples? (2019)

What follows from Machiavelli’s contention that, ‘In every republic there are two different dispositions, that of the populace and that of the upper class’ [MACHIAVELLI, Discourses on Livy, Book I]? (2018)

Which did Machiavelli value more: glory or liberty? (2017)

How should we explain Machiavelli’s conviction that ‘government by the populace is better than government by princes’ [MACHIAVELLI, Discourses on Livy, Book I]? (2016)

**A7 HOBBES**

(E) = Available via _iDiscover_
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

_**Set text:**_ Leviathan [1651], ed. R. Tuck, rev. edn (Cambridge, 1996) [not available online]
Students may also wish to consult the 3-volume edition by Noel Malcolm (2012) in the Clarendon Edition (E)

_**Secondary reading:**_


_Suggested secondary reading:_
*N. Malcolm, Aspects of Hobbes (Oxford 2002), esp. chs 1, 2, 5, and 13 (E)
* D. Runciman, Pluralism and the Personality of the State (Cambridge 1997), ch. 2 (E)
* _____, Hobbes and republican liberty (Cambridge 2008) (M – chapter 2 only)
* J. Sommerville, Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context (1992) (M – chapter 1 only)
Brett and J. Tully eds., Rethinking the foundations of modern political thought (Cambridge
2006) (E)

Further secondary reading:
_____., Contract theory in historical context: Essays on Grotius, Hobbes and Locke (Leiden
2010) (E)
C. Condren, Thomas Hobbes (Twayne 2000)
Transformation (1986)
S. Lloyd, Ideals as interests in Hobbes’s ‘Leviathan’ (Cambridge 1992) (E)
M. Oakeshott, ‘Introduction to Leviathan’ [1946], in Hobbes on Civil Association (1975), ch. 1
A. Ryan, ‘Hobbes’s political philosophy’, in Sorell, Companion, ch. 9 (E)
eds., Hobbes and History (Routledge 2000)
in G.E. Aylmer ed., The Interregnum (1972); rev. in Skinner, Visions, ch. 10 (E)
T. Sorell, Hobbes (1986), esp. chs 1-2, 8-10
Political Discourse in early modern Britain (1993), pp. 120-38 (E)
_____., ‘Introduction” to Leviathan, ed. R. Tuck (1996; replaces the 1991 introduction)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

Why did Hobbes think that his civil science was different from any other contemporary political
philosophy? (2022)

‘Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words’ [HOBSES, Leviathan, Chapter 17]. Is the sword the
only thing that prevents the Hobbesian commonwealth from falling apart? (2021)

‘For in a way beset with those that content, on one side for too great Liberty, and on the other side
for too much Authority, ‘tis hard to passe between the points of both unwounded’ [THOMAS
HOBBES, Leviathan, Dedicatory Epistle]. Discuss. (2020)

Why was Hobbes in Leviathan so insistent upon correct speech? (2019)

Why was Hobbes in Leviathan so insistent upon the ‘proper signification’ of liberty? (2017)

‘This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person’ [HOBBES, Leviathan, Ch. 17]. Why was Hobbes so insistent on this point? (2016)

A8 LOCKE

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Set texts:


Neither of these editions is available in digital form from the UL. Project Gutenberg hosts an edition of the Second Treatise, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, (1980) (E).


Suggested additional primary reading:


Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:
R. Ashcraft, ‘Revolutionary politics and Locke’s Two Treatises’, Political Theory, 8 (1980), 429-86 (E)
J. Dunn, The Political Thought of John Locke (1969) (E)
*M. Goldie, ‘Introduction’, to John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (Everyman, 1993) (M)
*J. Marshall, John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility (1994), esp. ch. 6 (E)
J. Scott, England’s Troubles (2000), ch. 16 (E)
J. Tully, A Discourse on Property (1980) (E)
*— — — , An Approach to Political Theory: Locke in Contexts (1993), esp. ch. 1 (E)
J. Waldron, God, Locke, and Equality (2002) (E)
Further secondary reading:
M. Goldie, ‘John Locke and Anglican Royalism’, *Political Studies*, 31 (1983), 61-85 (E)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

What did John Locke regard as the ‘end’ of civil government? (2022)

For what reasons did Locke set out to show the differences between ‘a Ruler of a Commonwealth, a Father of a Family, and a Captain of a Galley’ [LOCKE, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapter 1]? (2021)

What is the role of the ‘Appeal to Heaven’ in Locke’s political thought? (2020)

What is the effect on Locke’s politics of his conviction that we are on this earth to fulfil God’s purposes? (2019)

To what extent does Locke’s argument in Two Treatises of Government depend on the concept of trust? (2018)

Why was Locke so favourable to prerogative and executive power? (2017)

‘The community may make compounded and mixed forms of government, as they think good’ [LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, § 132]. Do Locke’s foundational political principles tend toward any particular form of government? (2016)

**B9. GREEK DEMOCRACY AND ITS CRITICS**

(E) = Available via *iDiscover*
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

*Primary reading:*

Abbreviation: EGPT = M. Gagarin and P. Woodruff (eds), *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* (Cambridge, 1995) (E)
Suggested primary reading:
Herodotus, Histories, bk III. 80-3 [in EGPT] (E)
Pseudo-Xenophon (the Old Oligarch), ‘Constitution of Athens’ [in EGPT] (E)
Aristophanes, The Knights [many editions, but see Acharnians; Knights, ed. by J. Henderson (2014) (E)]
Thucydides, History, bk II. 35-46, 60-64, bk III. 37-48 [in EGPT] (E)
Euripides, Suppliant Maidens, ll. 399-456 [in EGPT] (E)
Plato, Protagoras, 320-8; Gorgias; Republic, bks VI, VIII [For the Republic, see A1 Plato; for Protagoras, see Laches; Protagoras; Meno; Euthydemus, ed. by W.R.M. Lamb, (2014) (E); and for Gorgias, see Lysis; Symposium; Gorgias, ed. by W.R.M. Lamb (2014) (E)]
Aristotle, Politics, bks III-VI [see A2 Aristotle].

Secondary reading:
Suggested secondary reading:
J. Dunn, Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future (2nd edn, 1993), ch. 1
M.H. Hansen, Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes (1991, 1999), esp. chs 1, 13 (E)
*M. Lane, Greek and Roman Political Ideas (Pelican 2014); available online in its American edition under the title, The Birth of Politics: Eight Greek and Roman political ideas and why they matter, (2015) (E); ‘Introduction’ to British edition available on Moodle (M).
— — —, ‘Popular sovereignty as control of office-holders: Aristotle on Greek democracy’, in Bourke ed., Popular sovereignty (as for Hoekstra) (E)
C. Meier, The Greek Discovery of Politics (1990)
J. Miller, ‘Warning the Demos: Political Communication with a Democratic Audience in Demosthenes’, History of Political Thought, 23 (2002), 401-17 (E)
R. Osborne, Athens and Athenian Democracy (2010)
A. Saxonhouse, Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens (2008) (E)
D. Scott, ‘Plato’s critique of the democratic character’, Phronesis, 45 (2000), 19-37 (E)
G. de Ste Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World (1981; rev. 1983), ch. 7 & appdx IV

Further secondary reading:
M.I. Finley, Democracy Ancient and Modern (2nd edn, 1985) (E)
M.H. Hansen, Was Athens a Democracy? (1989)
J.T. Roberts, Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought (1994)
P. Vidal-Naquet, Democracy Ancient and Modern (1995), esp. pp. 82-140
B. Williams, Shame and Necessity (1988)
H. Yunis, Taming Democracy (1996) (E)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

Did opposition to democracy in ancient Athens amount to no more than blaming the people? (2022)

What was the place of law in the debate over the merits of democracy as a constitutional form in ancient Athens? (2021)

What threatened the stability of democratic government in the differing opinions of its advocates and detractors? (2020)

Were the disagreements between proponents and opponents of Athenian democracy essentially about equality? (2019)

What, if anything, united critics of Athenian democracy? (2018)

‘Critics of Athenian democracy owed the fundamentals of their arguments to the very political system that they opposed.’ Discuss. (2017)

To what extent did the differences between democrats and anti-democrats in ancient Athens turn on differing conceptions of political knowledge? (2016)

B10. ROMAN POLITICAL THOUGHT FROM THE REPUBLIC TO THE PRINCIPATE

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Suggested primary reading

Cicero, On Duties, trans. M. Atkins and M. Griffin (Cambridge, 1991) [unavailable online, but see ed. by W. Miller (2014) (E)
Seneca, On mercy and On the private life, in Seneca. Moral and political essays, ed. J.M. Cooper and J.F. Procopé (Cambridge, 1995) [not available online, but see the three-volume Loeb Classical library edition of Seneca’s Moral Essays. On mercy = de Clementia (vol. 1); On the private life = de Otio (vol. 2). (E) (Search 'Seneca Harvard').
Sallust, The war with Catiline and The war with Jugurtha, Loeb Classical Library (1921) (E)
Livy, Ab urbe condita, Loeb Classical Library (1919-67): bk I, chaps 24, 57; II, 32; III, 44; VIII, 28. (E)
Tacitus, Annals, Loeb Classical Library (1925-1937): bk I, 1-15; II, 27-36; III, 26-8; 52-70; IV, 1-22; 28-35; 42; VI, 8; 13; 22. (E)
Secondary reading

Abbreviations:
CHGRPT: C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds), The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought (Cambridge, 2000) (E)

Suggested secondary reading:
J. Connolly, The life of Roman republicanism (Princeton 2014) (E)
*A.A. Long, ‘Cicero’s politics in De officiis’, in Justice and Generosity, pp. 213-40. (E)
*P. Stacey, Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 23-72. (E)
T.E.J. Wiedemann, ‘Reflections of Roman political thought in Latin historical writing’, in CHGRPT, pp. 517-31. (E)

Further secondary reading:
E.M. Atkins, ‘Domina et regina virtutum: justice and societas in De officiis’, Phronesis, 35 (1990), 258-89. (E)
———, ‘Cicero’, in CHGRPT, pp. 477-516 (E)
D. Hoyos ed., A companion to Roman imperialism (Brill 2013), ch. by Stevenson and Adler (E)
———, ‘Two Stoic approaches to justice’, in Justice and Generosity, pp. 191-212. (E)
———, Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms (London, 1999), ch. 10.

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):
Why was concord such an important value in Roman political thought, and what was involved in maintaining it? (2022)

‘It is the social rather than the political dimension that makes Roman political thought distinctive.’ Do you agree? (2021)

Did virtue remain the central concept in Roman political thinking despite mutation of Rome’s constitutional form? (2020)

How did the advent of the Principate affect Roman political thought? (2019)

‘The principal preoccupation of Roman political thought became the control of passions by reason.’ Discuss. (2018)
‘To what extent did the advent of the Principate alter Roman thinking about political virtue? (2017)

Was Roman political thought intrinsically imperialist? (2016)

### B11. EARLY CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

(E) = Available via iDiscover

#### Suggested primary reading:

- The Epistle of St Paul to the Romans, ch. 13, New Testament (E)
- Tertullian, *Apology* (Loeb, 1984) (E)
- Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, trans. A. Bowen and P. Garnsey (Liverpool, 2003), bks 3-5. [not available online in this edition, but see the trans. by M.F. McDonald (1955) (E)].
- *St Gregory the Great. Pastoral Care*, tr. H. Davis, Ancient Christian Writers 11 (New Jersey, 1950), parts 1-2. [not available online. The translation by Philip Schaff for the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series can be found online at [https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf212/npnf212.iii.iv.i.html](https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf212/npnf212.iii.iv.i.html) [as of 20.3.20]]

#### Secondary reading

**Abbreviation:** CHMPT: J.H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450* (Cambridge, 1988) (E)

**Suggested secondary reading:**
- ———, ‘The Latin Fathers’, CHMPT, pp. 92-122. (E)

**Further secondary reading:**
A. Cameron, Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse (Berkeley, 1991) (E)
M. Colish, The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, 2 vols (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 34-5, 1985)
N. McLynn, Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital (Berkeley, London, 1994) (E)

And see above, A3, under Augustine.

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

How easily did the universalism of the Christian message sit with Roman political conceptions? (2022)

How did early Christian thinkers account for Rome’s success? (2021)

What were the political consequences of the rejection of classical ethics in early Christian thought? (2020)

In what ways did early Christian political thinkers subvert classical thought? (2019)

What significance did classical virtue have for early Christian political theorists? (2018)

How did early Christian writers respond to Roman conceptions of citizenship? (2017)

Were the political theories of early Christian thinkers defined by their differing visions of the Church? (2016)

**B12. TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL IN MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT**

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Suggested primary reading

Bernard of Clairvaux, Five Books on Consideration, trans. J.D. Anderson and E.T. Keenan (Cistercian Fathers Series 37) (Kalamazoo, 1976) [not online, but see trans. by G. Lewis (1908) at https://archive.org/details/bernarddeclirvau00bernuoft/page/n4/mode/2up ]
Innocent IV, selections from commentary on Novit and Quod super his, in Tierney, Crisis, pp. 153-6.
Hostiensis, selections from commentary on Per venerabilem and Solitae, in Tierney, Crisis, pp. 156-7.
Tierney’s collection is not available online, and it is not easy to identify a ready substitute. Some relevant selections can be found in the following resource from Fordham University: https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/sbook1l.asp.


Giles of Rome, On Ecclesiastical Power, trans. R.W. Dyson (Woodbridge, 1986), bk I, 4-6; bk II, 4, 7-12; bk III, 3, 9, 12. [not available online]


Secondary reading

Abbreviation:

Suggested secondary reading:
J.P. Canning, Ideas of power in the late middle ages 1296-1417 (Cambridge 2011) (E)
B. Tierney, Foundations of the Conciliar Theory (Cambridge, 1955) (E)

Further secondary reading:
B. Tierney, Crisis, 127-31; 150-53.
W. Ullmann, ‘Boniface VIII and his contemporary scholarship’, Journal of Theological Studies, 27 (1976), pp. 58-87 (E); repr. in Ullmann, Scholarship and Politics in the Middle Ages (1978)
Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

‘Later medieval debate about spiritual and temporal power was essentially about the papal office.’ Discuss. (2022)

On what grounds did thinkers disagree about the effects of excommunication in the debates about spiritual and temporal power in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? (2021)

‘Incompatible conceptions of the Church were the main driver of political disagreement about secular and papal power.’ Discuss. (2020)

‘The debates over the relationship between secular and papal power in the decades around 1300 turned principally on the concept of nature.’ Discuss. (2019)

Account for the differing significance attributed to sin by political polemicists around 1300. (2018)

To what extent was the disagreement between pro- and anti-papal writers in the Middle Ages a disagreement about jurisdictional claims? (2017)

‘The disagreements over papal and secular power in the decades around 1300 were essentially disagreements about the consequences of the Fall.’ Do you agree? (2016)

B13. MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF CLASSICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE LATIN WEST

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Suggested primary reading


Giles of Rome, ‘On the Rule of Princes’, in Cambridge Translations, as above (E)
Peter of Auvergne, ‘Commentary and Questions on Book III of Aristotle’s Politics (selections)’, in Cambridge Translations, as above (E)
Dante, Monarchy, ed. P. Shaw (Cambridge, 1996) (E)
Marsilius of Padua, The defender of the peace, Discourse I, trans A. Brett (Cambridge, 2005) (E) or A. Gewirth (1956, repr. 2001)
Secondary reading

Abbreviations:

Suggested secondary reading:
L. Peterman, ‘Dante’s Monarchy and Aristotle’s political thought’, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 10 (1973), 1-40 (E)
V. Syros, ‘The sovereignty of the multitude in the works of Marsilius of Padua, Peter of Auvergne and some other Aristotelian commentators’, in *The world of Marsilius of Padua*, as above (E)

Further secondary reading:
J. Aertsen and A. Speer eds., *Was ist Philosophie im Mittalter? / What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?* (Berlin 1998 = Miscellanea Mediaevalia 26) (E)
_____, *The worldview and thought of Tolomeo Fiadoni (Ptolemy of Lucca)* (Brepols 2013) (E)
D. Luscombe, ‘Commentaries on the Politics’, in Weijers and Holtz

See also the extensive bibliography online at [http://www.paleography.unifr.ch/petrus_de_alvernia/](http://www.paleography.unifr.ch/petrus_de_alvernia/) (click on Bibliographia)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):
To what extent did medieval thinkers recover the classical understanding of civic liberty? (2022)
Did the reception of classical political thought introduce any new political values to medieval political thought? (2021)
Did the reception of classical thought in the medieval period lead to a greater emphasis on the importance of political participation? (2020)
How did the recovery of the classical vocabulary of politics change the way medieval philosophers thought about monarchy? (2019)

What impact did classical notions of human nature have on medieval political thought? (2018)

To what extent did the recovery of classical conceptions of nature allow medieval thinkers to develop a political philosophy that was independent of theology? (2017)

How did medieval political thinkers respond to ancient concepts of citizenship and citizen rule? (2016)

**B14. ARGUMENT FROM ROMAN LAW IN POLITICAL THOUGHT, 12TH-16TH CENTURIES**

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

**Primary reading**

Suggested primary reading (not on Moodle):
- The Code of Justinian, in The Civil Law, trans. S.P. Scott, titles: 1.1.1; 1.14.1; 8.52(53) 2. [not available online]

Suggested primary reading (on Moodle)*:
- Azo: Selections from Summa codicis and Lectura codicis, on Code 3.13 and 8.52.2 respectively.
- Azo: Glosses to Digest, 1.1.5; 1.1.9; 1.3.31-32; 1.4.1; 3.4.
- Accursius: Standard Gloss to Code 3.13 and 8.52(53) 2; Digest 1.1.5; 1.1.9; 1.3.31; 1.3.32; 1.4.1; 3.4.
- Marinus de Caramanico: Select passages from the Proemium to his commentary on the Constitutions of the Kingdom of Sicily.
- Cinus of Pistoia: Introduction to a legal opinion on the laws of Florence.
- Johannes Faber: Select passages from commentary to C. 1.1.1.
- Bartolus of Sassoferrato: Selections from commentary on D. 1.1.9.
- Oldradus de Ponte: Select passages from Consilium 69 and 83.
- Baldus de Ubaldis: Select passages from his legal opinion Rex Romanorum and his commentary on D. 1.1.9.
- Petrus Helyas: Select passages from his legal opinion on the war between France and England.
- Jean de Terre Vermeille (Jean de Terre Rouge): Select passages from his treatise On those who rebel against their kings.
- Guillaume Budé: Selections from his commentary on D. 1.3.31 and his Livre de l’institution du prince.
- Jacques Cujas: Selections from his Observationes on C. 6.23.3 and 6.32.3.
These readings may change from time to time. A selection drawn from the texts above will be made available on Moodle and in lecture handouts. It is essential to attend Dr Ryan’s lectures if studying for this topic.

Secondary reading

Abbreviations:
TRHS: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (E)

Suggested secondary reading:
* J.P. Canning, ‘Law, sovereignty and corporation theory, 1300-1450’, in CHMPT, pp. 454-76. (E)
* ———, Ideas of power in the late middle ages 1296-1417 (Cambridge 2011), Ch. 5. (E)
* K. Pennington, ‘Law, legislative authority, and theories of government, 1150-1300’, CHMPT, ch. 15. (E)
* ———, The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600 (Princeton, 1993), chapters 1-3, 6. (E)
* P. Stein, ‘Roman Law’, in CHMPT, pp. 37-47. (E)

B. Tierney, Religion, Law and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150-1650 (1982), chs 1-3 (E)
* C. Woolf, Bartolus of Sassoferrato: His Position in the History of Medieval Political Thought (Cambridge, 1913) (E)

Further secondary reading:
* ———, The Political Thought of Baldus de Ubaldis (Cambridge, 1987; reissued 2002) (E)
* Daniel Lee, Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought (Oxford, 2016) (E)
* P. Stein, Roman Law in European History (1999), esp. chs 3-4. (E)
**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

How important in Renaissance humanist political thought is the use of political comparison? (2022)

How important was territory in the political thought of the later medieval lawyers? (2021)

Assess the importance of the corporation (universitas) in the political thought of the medieval Roman lawyers. (2020)

To whom did later medieval lawyers attribute the power to legislate, and on what grounds? (2019)

What role does the concept of the people play in the political thought of the medieval lawyers? (2018)

How did fourteenth-century Roman law jurists deploy the concept of the corporation in their analysis of political phenomena? (2017)

To whom did medieval experts in Roman law accord the power to legislate and why? (2016)

**B15 RENAISSANCE HUMANISM AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**

(E) = Available via iDiscover

(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

**Abbreviations:**


Kraye: J. Kraye, ed. Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts (2 vols; 1997), vol. II: Political Philosophy (E)

**Suggested primary reading:**


Bartolomeo Sacchi (Il Platina), ‘On the Prince’ [1471], in Kraye, ch. 6 (E) or (M)

Bartolomeo Scala, ‘Dialogue on Laws and Legal Judgements’ [1483], in Kraye, ch. 12 (E)

Giovanni Pontano, ‘On the Prince’, in Kraye, ch. 5 (E)

Aurelio Lippo Brandolini, ‘Republics and Kingdoms Compared’ [*c*. 1491], ed. and tr. J. Hankins (I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard 2009) [not available online]


Francesco Guicciardini, ‘How the Popular Government Should be Reformed’ [1512], in Kraye, ch. 13 (E)


Thomas More, Utopia [1516], eds G. M. Logan and R. M. Adams (Cambridge, 1989) [see A5 More]
Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:
*P. Kristeller, ‘Humanism’, in CHRP, ch. 5 (E)
M. Viroli, From Politics to Reason of State (1992) (E)

Further secondary reading:
H. Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (2nd edn, 1966), esp. the ‘Epilogue’ (E)
J. Kraye, ‘Moral Philosophy’, in CHRP, ch. 11 (E)
J. McConica, Erasmus (1991)
J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment (1975; reissue with new postscript 2003), pt II (E)
J.E. Seigel, Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism (1968) (E)
———, Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes (1996), ch. 2 (E)
R.G. Witt, 'In the Footsteps of the Ancients': The origins of humanism from Lovato to Bruni (2000), esp. ch. 11 (E)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

How important in Renaissance humanist political thought is the use of political comparison? (2022)
Did the humanist proclivity for literary dialogue reflect a genuine ambivalence over the best form of government? (2021)

How widely were the political ideals of the Florentine republic shared by humanist writers on politics? (2020)

How far did Renaissance humanists agree that liberty was the highest political good? (2019)
Do the disagreements between humanists over the relative advantages of princely and republican governments reveal any fundamental differences of principle? (2018)

How important was history to Renaissance humanist political thought? (2018)

Why did Renaissance humanist writers on politics think that virtue was so important, and how did they think it could be attained? (2016)

B16 OBEDIENCE AND RESISTANCE IN REFORMATION POLITICAL THOUGHT

(E) = Available via iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

Luther and Calvin, *On Secular Authority*, ed. H. Höpfl (Cambridge, 1991) [not available online from UL.


François Hotman, *Francogallia* [1573], trans. R.E. Giesey and J.H.M. Salmon (Cambridge, 1972) [not available online through the UL; see alternatively, [https://constitution.org/cmt/hotman/franco-gallia.htm](https://constitution.org/cmt/hotman/franco-gallia.htm)].


Secondary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:


*R.M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and resistance theory’, in Burns and Goldie, ch. 7 (E)


A.E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (1988), chs 5, 8 (E)

F. Oakley, ‘Christian obedience and authority’, in Burns and Goldie, ch. 6 (E)
*Q. Skinner, Foundations of Modern Political Thought (2 vols; 1978), vol ii: The Age of Reformation (E)

Further secondary reading:
W. Balke, Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals (1981), chs 2, 10
J. H. Burns, ‘The political thought of George Buchanan’, Scottish Historical Review, 30 (1951), 60-8 (E)
W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, The Political Thought of Martin Luther (1984)
F.E. Cranz, An Essay on the Development of Luther’s Thought (1959)
D.R. Kelley, Francois Hotman: A Revolutionary’s Ordeal (1973) (E)
S. Kusukawa, The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon (1995), ch. 5 (E)
I.D. McFarlane, Buchanan (1981), ch. 11, pt 2
J. Witte, Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation (2002), ch. 4 (E)
______, The Reformation of Rights (2007) (E)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

How important was justice in the resistance theories of the sixteenth century? (2022)

‘If resistance theory had any historical constant, it was the figure of the inferior magistrate.’ Discuss. (2021)

Why was the history of magistrates insufficient on its own to support the contentions of Calvinist resistance theorists? (2020)

Assess the importance of natural principles in Calvinist resistance theory. (2019)

Account for the prominence of junior magistrates in Calvinist political theory. (2018)

What agency did Lutheran and Calvinist resistance theories give to the collective people? (2017)

Assess the importance and effectiveness of historical argument in Calvinist resistance tracts. (2016)
B17 REASON OF STATE

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Suggested primary reading:

Justus Lipsius, Politica [1589], trans. J. Waszink (Amsterdam, 2004) or as Sixe Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine, trans. W. Jones [1594; on Early English Books Online (E)] (facs. repr. 1970)


Francis Bacon, ‘Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates’, ‘Of Empire’, ‘Of Simulation and Dissimulation’, in Essays (numerous editions) [e.g. ed., by M. Kiernen (2000) (E)]


Henri, duc de Rohan, Treatise of the Interests of the Princes and States of Christendom, trans. H. Hunt (1640) [on EEBO (E)]

Armand du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu, trans. H.B. Hill (1964) [not available online, but see The Political Will and Testament of the Minister of State Cardinal Duke de Richelieu (1695) [on EEBO (E)].]

Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:


H. Höpfl, ‘Orthodoxy and Reason of State’, History of Political Thought, 23 (2002), 211-37 (E)

*N. Keohane, Philosophy and the State in France: Renaissance to Enlightenment (1980), chs 4-5 (E)

*N. Malcolm, Reason of State, propaganda and the Thirty Years War (Oxford, 2007) (E)

M. Peltonen, Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640 (1995), chs 3-4 (E)


R. Tuck, Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651 (1993), chs 2-4 (E)

*M. Viroli, From Politics to Reason of State (1992), chs 4-6 (E)
Further secondary reading:


W.F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (1973) (E)


H. Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c.1540-1630* (2004), chs 5-8 (E)


F. Meinecke, *The Doctrine of Raison d’État and its Place in Modern History* (1957), chs 2-7


K.C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (1976), chs 5-7

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

‘They seem not to know this age and its men, and to give their opinion as if they were in the republic of Plato rather than the dregs of Romulus’ (JUSTUS LIPIUS, *Politics*). Did exponents of reason of state renounce all moral idealism? (2022)

Were theorists of reason of state obsessed with the psychology of government at the expense of its structures? (2021)

What was the ‘reason’ in ‘reason of state’? (2020)

How did reason of state theorists reconfigure the relationship between prudence and virtue? (2019)

How was the thinking of reason of state theorists influenced by their understanding of the purposes of the state? (2018)

What place was there for virtue in ‘reason of state’? (2017)

‘The achievement of reason of state was to isolate power as a distinctive component of political success.’ Do you agree? (2016)
B18 SOVEREIGNTY

(E) = Available via iDiscover  (M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Suggested primary reading

John Cowell, The Interpreter (London, 1610), s.v. ‘King (Rex)’ [on EEBO (E)]
Francisco Suárez, On Laws and God the Law-giver, Bk III, Chh. 1-4, in Francisco Suárez. Selections from Three Works (Oxford 1944), vol. II (translation); reprint of vol II, ed. by T. Pink, (Indianapolis, 2015), available online https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/selections-from-three-works
Sir Robert Filmer, Patriarcha, in Patriarcha and Other Political Works, ed. J.P. Sommerville (Cambridge, 1991) (E)

Secondary reading:

Abbreviation:

Suggested secondary reading:
A.S. Brett, Changes of state (2011), Ch. 5 (E)
J.H. Franklin, ‘Sovereignty and the mixed constitution: Bodin and his critics’, in CHPT, ch. 10 (E)
J.H.M. Salmon, ‘Catholic resistance theory, Ultramontanism and the royalist response’, in CHPT Ch. 8 (E)
________, ‘The legacy of Jean Bodin: absolutism, populism or constitutionalism’, History of Political Thought, 17 (1996), 500-22. (E)
________, Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context (1992), Ch. 4-5
R. Tuck, Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651 (1992), Ch. 5 (E)
________, The sleeping sovereign (Cambridge 2016) (E)
Further secondary reading:
H. Höpfl, *Jesuit political thought* (2004), chh. 9, 10, 13, 14 (E)
————, ‘Absolutism and royalism’, in CHPT (E)

For further reading on Hobbes see under A7

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

For early modern political theorists, how important was the question of origins in determining both the nature and the location of sovereign power? (2022)

‘Early modern theories of sovereignty were unable to exit the orbit of absolute monarchy.’ Discuss. (2021)

Why was Grotius so exceptional among early modern theorists of sovereignty in holding that sovereign power could be divided? (2020)

What space, if any, did early modern theories of sovereignty leave for political actors other than the sovereign? (2019)

How did early modern theorists of sovereignty seek to assure unity? (2018)

Why were early modern theorists of sovereignty so concerned to characterise as incoherent any notion of ‘mixed’ government? (2017)

Did theorists of sovereignty sacrifice all forms of political deliberation to the imperative of a ruling will? (2016)

**B19 ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW**

(E) = Available via iDiscover

*Suggested primary reading*

Francisco Suárez, *On Laws and God the Law-giver*, Bk II ch. 17-20; Bk III ch. 2; *De Caritate* Disputation XIII, ‘On war’, sections 1, 2, 4 and 5, in Francisco Suárez, *Selections from Three Works* (Oxford 1944), vol. II (translation). N.B. this editions has been reissued with a new introduction, ed. by T. Pink, (Indianapolis 2015); it is available online in the Online Library of Liberty: [https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/selections-from-three-works](https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/selections-from-three-works)

Alberico Gentili, *De iure belli libri tres* (Oxford: Clarendon 1933), vol. II (translation), Bk I chh. 1-6, 12-16 [not available online]


**Secondary reading**

Suggested secondary reading:


G. Cavallar, *The rights of strangers. Theories of international hospitality, the global community and political justice since Vitoria* (2002), chh. 2 and 3


*B. Kingsbury and B. Straumann eds.,* *The Roman foundations of the law of nations* (2010), esp. chh. 7, 9, 15, 16 (E)


*R. Tuck, The rights of war and peace* (1999), Introduction and chh. 1-3 (E)

Further secondary reading:

A. Anghie, *Imperialism, sovereignty and the making of international law* (2005), ch. 1 (E)

O. Asbach and P. Schröder eds., *War, the state and international law in the seventeenth century* (2010), esp. chh. 5 and 9 (E)


L. Benton, *A search for sovereignty. Law and geography in European Empires 1400-1900* (2010), esp. chh. 1, 3, 6 (E)


M. Koskenniemi, ‘Empire and international law: The real Spanish contribution’, University of Toronto Law Journal 61 (2011) (E)


_____., Lords of all the world (1995), ch. 2


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

What authority could any early modern theorist claim in pronouncing on the nature of law between nations? (2022)

Why was the question of sources so important in the early modern construction of the law of nations? (2021)

Was the early modern law of nations anything more than a charter for European imperial expansion? (2020)

How important was the notion of pan-human society in the early modern law of nations? (2019)

How important was natural reason for early modern theorists of international law? (2018)

What resources could early modern jurists and theologians draw upon to construct a conception of law between nations? (2017)

‘The early modern law of nations was effectively the law of war.’ Do you agree? (2016)

B20. POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE BRITISH REVOLUTIONS

(E) = Available via iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)

Suggested primary reading:

The civil war (all sources on EEBO (E): no modern edition)
Henry Parker, Observations upon some of His Majesties late Answers and Expresses (1642)
Henry Parker, Jus populi (1644)
Samuel Rutherford, Lex, rex: The Law and the Prince (1644); questions I-IX, XXI-XXV, XXVIII-XXIX.

The Levellers
The English Levellers, ed. A. Sharp (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 33-72, 92-157, 168-78 (E)

The Commonwealth
John Milton, Political Writings, ed. M. Dzelzainis (Cambridge, 1991), esp. ‘The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates’ [1649] (pp. 3-48) [unavailable online, but for 1649 edition of . ‘The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates’, see EEBO (E).


Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:
* John Coffey, Politics, Religion, and the British Revolutions: The mind of Samuel Rutherford (1997), ch. 6 (E).
R. Tuck, Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651 (1993), ch. 6

Further secondary reading:
Michael Mendle, ed., The Putney Debates of 1647 (2001), esp. chs. by Mendle and Crawford

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

What is the place of ‘the people’ in the political arguments made in the British Revolutions? (2022)

How far did Parliamentarian authors writing before 1649 lay the ideological foundations for defences of the English Commonwealth following that date? (2021)

In what ways did political writers of the British revolutions counter the royalist claim that kingly power came directly from God? (2020)

‘No right of rebellion was articulated in the British Revolutions. Theorists of resistance held that rebellion was what tyrants were guilty of.’ Discuss.

What space did English republican authors leave for monarchy? (2018)

Why were the English Parliamentarians so reluctant to accept that their case implied a right to depose tyrannical kings? (2017a)

Assess the relative roles in Leveller thought of natural law and common law ancient constitutionalism. (2017b)

‘Power is originally inherent in the people’ [HENRY PARKER, *Observations upon some of his Majesties late Answers and Expresses*]. How far did defenders of the Parliamentarian cause face up to the implications of this claim? (2016)

**B21 TOLERATION IN THE LATER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**

(E) = Available via *iDiscover*

**Suggested Primary Reading:**


Secondary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:


Further secondary reading:

J. Israel, 'The intellectual debate about toleration in the Dutch Republic', in The Emergence of Toleration in the Dutch Republic, ed. J.I. Israel et al. (Leiden, 1997), pp. 3–36


J. Marshall, John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture (Cambridge, 2006) (E)


R. Vernon, The Career of Toleration: John Locke, Jonas Proast, and After (Montreal, 1997)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

In what ways did later seventeenth-century advocates of toleration rebut arguments for religious coercion? (2022)

In what ways did later seventeenth-century defenders of religious toleration connect it with political liberty? (2021)

‘...An individual may declare and teach what he believes, without injury to the authority of his ruler, or to the public peace’ [SPINOZA, Theologico-Political Treatise, ch. XI]. How widely was this view shared among later seventeenth-century writers on toleration? (2020)

‘Separation of church and state’ is an anachronistic concept to foist on late seventeenth-century theorists of toleration.’ Discuss. (2019)

Why did early modern advocates of toleration set limits on it? (2018)

‘Most tolerationists were more committed to the principle of the duty to communicate the truth than to the right to liberty of conscience.’ Discuss. (2017)

How did late seventeenth-century theorists of toleration analyse the power of clergies? (2016)

Appendix: Past Papers and Examiners’ Reports

Past papers are most easily accessed via the POL7 Moodle site. https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=102772

(All Tripos questions from the last seven years appear as suggested supervision questions.)

N.B. Occasionally the exam papers list Machiavelli as question 5, and More as question 6.

Examiner: Dr Sylvana Tomaselli

37 POL7 scripts were submitted in 2022 (compared to 45 in 2021, 24 in 2020, 47 in 2019, 42 in 2018, and 38 in 2017). The quality of most of these scripts reflected the excellence of the lectures offered for this paper as candidates did not simply reproduce the knowledge they had acquired from them, but showed considerable understanding of the concepts, issues, and contexts covered by the lecturers. The average mark across all scripts was like last year just under 67. However, some answers were unquestionably deserving of the very high firsts (high 70s, indeed 80) that they received.

What contributed to making these scripts outstanding is that their authors thought about the wording of the questions very carefully. They made most of the opportunity these terms opened up to display detailed knowledge and responsiveness to nuanced phrasing. Thus, they addressed what the people had been blamed for by the different critics of democracy in ancient Athens in answering question 9: ‘Did opposition to democracy amount to no more than blaming the people’. The less impressive scripts merely listed what was said by critics about the ignorance and self-interestedness of the people. Such answers did not tackle the question as it stood. Likewise,
candidates who tackled the More question divided between those who reflected on what might (or might not) be deemed fairness and those who did not in answering: ‘Does the ‘fairness’ that is identified by Raphael Hythloday as a key quality of the Utopian commonwealth imply it should be regarded as a democracy’. The best essays reflected on the nature of fairness in Utopia, whether its governance could be deemed democratic, and whether a conception of fairness related to its governance. Amongst the very best answers were some on Aristotle and Roman political thought. There were 12 first-class marks, 5 lower seconds, and the rest obtained upper seconds. There 16 answers on Plato, 17 on Machiavelli, 11 on More, 7 on Locke, and 6 on Aristotle. All other authors were discussed by at least one candidate, with the question on Aquinas receiving 2 very strong answers. It may be that the question on Hobbes was deemed particularly challenging as it met with little response. Candidates who were not familiar with Machiavelli’s Discourses inevitably struggled with the question: ‘What is the significance of Machiavelli’s claim, in his Discourse on Livy, that the ancient Romans were more virtuous than they were fortunate?’. In such cases, they wrote of fortuna in The Prince, with no less inevitable consequences. For the Plato question, ‘Is Plato’s ideal city best seen as an attempt to satisfy the requirements of human nature?’, some reflected on the precise requirements of human nature according to Plato’s Republic, considered the city of pigs as well the ideal city in relation to meeting such requirements, and specified whose (if not all human beings) requirements might or might not be met in Kallipolis. In sum, whatever the topic candidates who read questions attentively, thought of the issues underpinning them, and demonstrated close attention to the detailed argumentation in the set texts wrote engaging scripts and were duly rewarded for doing so.

In Section B, there were some impressive answers amongst the 6 that tackled Greek critics of democracy as well as those which discussed ‘For early modern political theorists, how important was the question of origins in determining both the nature and the location of sovereign power?’. Weaker responses to the latter question tended to leave out or brush over one or more of the key terms ‘origins’, ‘nature’, or ‘location’. All Section B questions received at least one answer bar two, namely ‘To what extent did medieval thinkers recover the classical understanding of civic liberty?’ and ‘How important was justice in the resistance theories of the sixteenth century?’. The question on Roman political thought and early Christian thought each attracted 5 replies. The question of Renaissance humanist political thought (‘How important in Renaissance humanist political thought is the use of comparison?’) received most (8), some of which were very impressive in that they revealed extensive reading of the texts and the scholarly literature. They noted comparisons between individuals as well as regimes and specified the precise nature of their use by various Renaissance humanists.

As Dr Chris Brooke noted in his report for this paper last year ‘a small number of essays did read as if they had their origin in supervision essays that were addressing a different question altogether, and candidates do need to be advised on the one hand that it’s pretty obvious what they are doing when they hand in an essay that speaks more to the themes of, say, last year’s Tripos question on a particular topic than to the question in front of them, and that on the other hand they are never likely to do especially well if they do that.’ It is to be hoped that candidates do not resort to such strategies in 2023 and that Dr Brooke’s comment will therefore not need repeating.

2020-21

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Forty-five POL7 scripts were submitted in 2021 (compared to 24 last year, when the assessment was effectively optional, 47 in 2019, 42 in 2018, and 38 in 2017). After last year’s exceptional
measures we returned to the traditional way of marking POL7, with full blind double-marking restored. The standard was good, with the average mark across all scripts 66.9. There were fifteen first-class marks, twenty-six upper seconds, and four lower seconds.

Popular questions were on Plato, as ever (25), Machiavelli (22), More (13), and Aristotle (10), with the other topics getting single figure answers: Hobbes (8), reason of state (8), Romans (7), Renaissance humanism (7), sovereignty (7), international law (6), Locke (5), Greek critics of democracy (5), resistance theory (3), Augustine (2), temporal and spiritual power (2), religious toleration (2), the mediaeval reception of classical thought (1), mediaeval Roman law (1), and the conflict we used to call the English Civil War (1), with no answers on Aquinas or on the political thought of the early Christians. This is in line with recent patterns; the Renaissance humanism topic in particular is less popular than it used to be.

Like last year, the exam was taken remotely in the ‘open book’ format, i.e. candidates had access to their notes, essays, books, internet, etc. while working on their script, though this year the ‘window’ was six-hours long for candidates without an allowance of additional time. There was no evidence of malpractice—e.g. plagiarism—but a small number of essays did read as if they had their origin in supervision essays that were addressing a different question altogether, and candidates do need to be advised on the one hand that it’s pretty obvious what they are doing when they hand in an essay that speaks more to the themes of, say, last year’s Tripos question on a particular topic than to the question in front of them, and that on the other hand they are never likely to do especially well if they do that. The essays they have written for their supervisions are an invaluable resource when preparing for these exams, but the answers they submit do need to have been freshly composed in the examination itself, and tightly addressed to the particular questions that the Examiners are asking.

Turning now to those particular questions, some comments follow on those where we have five or more answers (so as to make generalisation possible). In Section A, stronger answers on Plato tended either to reflect on how the word ‘utopian’ can be taken in different ways or to discuss the way in which the analogy between the city and the soul complicates a straightforward answer to the question. The more successful essays on Aristotle got stuck into particular parts of his discussions of particular issues rather than just offering an overview of the basic argument. The essays on Machiavelli were stronger to the extent that they identified points of disagreement between the arguments of the Prince and the Discourses and talked about those; weaker essays offered bland summary of some of the things that the two texts had in common, which wasn’t helpful in getting a grip on the central issue raised by the question. The essays on More were generally fairly good, though a surprising number ended up spending too long discussing topics that weren’t really relevant to the matter at hand. Essays on Hobbes often focused too narrowly on his argument about the covenant early on (sometimes also the state of nature and the laws of nature), bypassing his various practical discussions of how the Sovereign might prevent the commonwealth from falling apart through judicious management of religion, education, opinion, and so on. The weaker essays on Locke explained how he was disagreeing with Filmer; the stronger essays paid specific attention to the intriguing mention of ‘a Captain of a Galley’ in the title quotation.

For the section B topics, essays on the ancient critics of democracy found an ingenious number of different ways of approaching the topic of law, which was refreshing. Answers on the Romans went wrong either because they didn’t pause for long enough over the distinction between what was ‘social’ and ‘political’ or because they focused more on how various Roman writers were distinctive, rather than addressing the character of Roman political thought more generally. The stronger
answers on Renaissance humanism, unsurprisingly, were those that focused their attention on texts presented in dialogue form.

Essays on *raison d'état* that had more to say about what the various authors said about ‘structures of government’ were better than those that had less, and those essays that were more firmly plugged into the detail of the literature—both primary and secondary—were better than those that were not. Answers on sovereignty rewarded those candidates who were able to make pertinent distinctions amongst the various set authors, and who thought harder about what it might mean to ‘escape the orbit’ of absolute monarchy. The essays on international law were generally well done, with candidates having both a sense of how the various authors were deploying different sources, or locating their argument in different traditions, and sometimes with a good sense of how this cashed out in different opinions about war, empire, etc.

In short and in sum, on the evidence of these Tripos scripts the POL7 paper remains in rude health. The candidates themselves are to be congratulated for getting through the year in sometimes extremely challenging conditions.

2019-20

**Examiner: Miss Sylvana Tomaselli**

24 candidates sat this paper. In Section A, the most popular question this year was on Plato (13 answers), followed by those on Machiavelli (12), More (7), Aristotle (7), Hobbes (2), Locke (1) and Aquinas (1), and none on Augustine. In Section B, the most popular question was ‘What threatened the stability of democratic government in the differing opinions of its advocates and detractors?’ (11), followed by ‘How widely were the political ideals of the Florentine republic shared by humanist writers on politics?’ (8), ‘Did virtue remain the central concept in Roman political thinking despite the mutation of Rome’s constitutional form?’ (4), ‘Was the early modern law of nations anything more than a charter for European imperial expansion?’ (3), ‘In what ways did political writers of the British revolutions counter the royalist claim that kingly power came directly from God?’ ‘Why was Grotius so exceptional among early modern theorists of sovereignty in holding that sovereign power could be divided?’, and ‘What was the ‘reason’ in ‘reason of state?’ each received 1 answer. Several of the candidates chose to answer two questions in Section B.

A few points emerge that reiterate reports of previous years. The first is that while some candidates clearly mastered a wide array of subjects, some were more narrowly focused on the Ancients, and while these included excellent and clearly distinct answers, some came close to repeating the same material. The second is that some scripts seemed oblivious of the fact that they needed to be legible. The third is that, in some cases, there was a lack of critical engagement with the question and/or inattentiveness as to its precise nature. This was evident, for instance, in some of the answers to the question on More (‘To what extent should we regard Thomas More’s *Utopia* as exposing the perils of hereditary monarchy?’) in which monarchy and aristocracy were amalgamated into one, their hereditary aspect left unexamined, every social ill deemed, by More, to be attributable to hereditary monarchy, and the government of Utopia itself left bereft of scrutiny.

The quality of the scripts was high over-all and truly impressive in some cases. Most were well-written and structured, and the best provided a flowing well-supported argument for the answer they put forward. Some demonstrated not only a close reading of the set texts, but a genuine understanding of the issues these texts were tackling as well as of the context relevant to achieve
this level of comprehension. A few were also able to provide a succinct account of the scholarly debate pertinent to the question under discussion. At the other end of the spectrum were answers that began with a potted biographical or historical account followed by a vague summary of the political thought of the author or school in question. These did not focus on the precise question addressed or left out one aspect of it. Some answers to the question on Plato’s Republic, for example, spoke of the theory of forms, the three classes, and/or the allegory of the cave amongst other parts of that work, but did not explain what it identified as the ‘requirements’ of human psychology or how that related to Plato’s political ‘recommendations’. The city of pigs, for instance, was left unmentioned in several of the answers in which it was most needed. Some answer to the question on Utopia gave a very good account of Utopia’s actual governance, others none. Some outlined what might be taken as ‘the expression of a democratic ideal’, others took it as self-evident.

Analyses of the arguments about what threatened ancient democratic government were mostly nuanced and some displayed extensive reading and genuine reflection on the views held about rhetoric, demagoguery, and political leadership. One or two of the answers on humanist writers showed unusual level of erudition and originality.

In sum, those who had read the set texts with attention to the shape and detail of the arguments within them, and the language (s) and images used by their authors, as well as demonstrated awareness of the conceptual issues involved and of the debates within the scholarship did best as always. The few, who had read only one of the set texts (e.g. The Prince), or who had a very superficial understanding of a set text (e.g. Utopia), or who did not explore the full implications of the questions, rehashing their weekly essays or regurgitating their lecture notes, did least well.

What is needed is clear evidence of textual knowledge to be sure, but of the relevant and specific parts of the text(s). This requires knowledge of the text(s) in the first place, but that should be taken to mean an understanding of what they seek to achieve and how they do so, not mere restatement of what it was that the author wrote. This may very well require some biographical knowledge or knowledge of the intellectual and historical contexts in which the author(s) under consideration wrote, but such a knowledge needs to be selective, woven into the answer where appropriate, and only presented if specifically relevant to the issue at hand.

This said, this truly was a very good year for POL 7, one that reflected the very high intellectual standard of the lectures and supervisions provided.

2018-19

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Forty-seven scripts were generated for this paper (up from 42 in 2018 and 38 in 2017), and blind double-marked in the usual way. The standard of the answers was pleasingly high: thirteen students received a first-class mark overall, there were thirty upper seconds, and four lower seconds.

The more popular questions were on Plato (19 answers), Machiavelli (18), More (15), Aristotle (14—more popular than usual), Athenian democracy (10), raison d’état (9), and Renaissance humanism (7—less popular than usual). All questions attracted at least one answer—though Aquinas, the mediaeval reception of classical thought, and the English Civil War attracted only one answer. The mediaeval topics were not wholly neglected: there were four answers on Augustine,
four on the early Christians, three on papal power, and two on Roman law. We had fewer answers than we normally receive on Hobbes and Locke.

In general, there were no glaring problems. Last year’s Examiner’s Report, for example, chastised POL7 candidates for their “insufficiently close engagement with the relevant set texts” and for being “excessively dependent on the views of Bernard Williams concerning Plato, and of Quentin Skinner concerning, especially, Machiavelli and More”, but there was little sign of these difficulties this year. Very few essays indeed read like rehashed supervision essays or regurgitated lecture notes. Indeed, the wide range of different arguments that were attempted with respect to the various authors, texts, and topics strongly suggested that students were thinking for themselves, drawing productively on a broad range of reading and reflection—and this made the Examiners very happy to see.

Turning to particular questions in Section A: writing on Plato was very popular, as ever, with the stronger essays avoiding the Scylla of too much exposition of Socrates’ argument, getting in the way of answering the question posed, on the one hand, and the Charybdis of having so much to say about particular commentators that a central line of argument was obscured, on the other. Weaker essays on Aristotle got bogged down in his typology of regimes, and had less to say about the concept of politeia itself. A strong essay on Augustine needed to discuss (i) love, (ii) as it operates within his political theory, (iii) with specific reference to the text of City of God, with too many candidates only managing two out of three. There was a nice variety of answers to the Machiavelli question (concerning war, glory, fortuna, religion, the army, dictatorship, tumults, the mixed constitution, liberty, virtù, and so on), with stronger essays moving beyond “because that’s what humanists did” to focus on a single line of argument (“what best explains…”), discussing particular examples from the set texts, and avoiding getting sidetracked by the attempt to resolve interpretative disagreements in the secondary scholarship. As is usual, the strongest essays on Utopia were very strong indeed, with good answers often seeing that the word “virtuous” isn’t entirely straightforward, and could be pointing in a number of different directions. Too many candidates who answered on Hobbes just didn’t know enough about what he had to say about correct speech in Leviathan to write a good essay. Essays on Locke were either weak (candidates with only an introductory knowledge of his political theory, who tried to make things about “liberalism”) or strong (candidates who had thought quite a bit about God in Locke’s theory, and had things to say), with not much by way of any middle ground.

In Section B, answers to the question on Athenian democracy sometimes spent too long discussing rhetoric or knowledge when there was still quite a bit to say about equality. The stronger essays on Renaissance humanism saw that there were different conceptions of liberty in the various texts, and discussed what some of these were. Some answers on raison d’état were strong, with good knowledge especially of Botero on display, but they were strongest when they addressed the precise theme picked out by the question (the relationship between prudence and virtue), rather than just saying a few things about prudence, and a few things about virtue. Essays on international law often expressed criticism of early modern European imperialism, but were stronger to the extent that they were able to explore this theme through the theoretical texts under consideration.

2017-18

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke
Forty-two candidates sat the paper, slightly up on last year’s thirty-eight. Six received an overall First-class mark, there were thirty-three Upper Seconds, and three Lower Seconds. The median mark was 65, and the mean 65.33.

The Plato question is perennially popular, attracting twenty answers this year, after which they lined up as follows: Machiavelli (14), Locke (12), Renaissance humanism (12), More (9), Hobbes (8), Aristotle (7), Athenian democracy (7), Augustine (6), sovereignty (6), mediaeval reception of classical thought (5), Romans (4), British revolutions (4), resistance theory (3), international law (3), toleration (3), early Christians (2), Aquinas (1), and *raison d’état* (1), with two of the mediaeval questions, on spiritual and temporal power and on Roman law, attracting no candidates.

The most general difficulty was an insufficiently close engagement with the relevant set texts. Examiners on this paper are used, for example, to essays on Augustine reading as if textbooks were among the main sources, rather than *City of God*, and to Aristotle answers offering too much general summary of his system before getting stuck in to the particular question that has been asked. But this year a version of this problem bedevilled the answers on Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, too, with answers that weren’t sufficiently able to support their arguments by showing close familiarity with the more puzzling or challenging relevant bits of his text. Other candidates threw away marks with insufficiently productive approaches to the questions (so discussing the mediaeval reception of classical thought in general, rather than specifically with reference to the question of human nature; and the question about what the Athenian critics of democracy shared attracted answers that focused either on what they didn’t share, or on some very bland thoughts indeed, e.g. that they didn’t like tyrants).

There are some welcome developments. Earlier iterations of this paper have seen candidates excessively dependent on the views of Bernard Williams concerning Plato, and of Quentin Skinner concerning, especially, Machiavelli and More. This tendency was not nearly so prominent this year, with Ferrari, Schofield, Ober, and, especially, Nehamas lining up as alternative interpreters of Plato with whom candidates engaged more or less productively. (There was one mention of Skinner that delighted the Examiners, however, in an essay which discussed his views as if he were actually a participant in the great constitutional debates of 1640!) And—pleasingly—there was next to no sign of essays on particular topics that read as if great chunks of lecture notes were being paraphrased or summarised this time around, with the candidates taking a diversity of approaches, strongly suggesting that they are really thinking for themselves as they construct their answers.