

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

Political Science 409L: Medieval Political Theory  
TuTh 1:00-2:15 p.m., WRI C237

Spring 2008  
Professor Fott

Office: WRI B217; 895-4187  
Office hours: Tue. 2:30-3:30 p.m., Wed. and Thu. 2:30-4:30 p.m., or by appointment  
E-mail: dfott@unlv.nevada.edu

In this course we will explore leading Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers of the medieval era, as well as the Bible and the Koran. The central question of the course will be, What is the proper relation between religion and politics?

**Required Readings:**

A. The following books have been ordered for purchase and should be available at the library on two-hour reserve:

Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds. *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*. Cornell Univ. Press, 1963. (abbreviated below as L&M)  
Augustine. *Political Writings*. Translated by Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas Kries. Hackett, 1994.  
Thomas Aquinas. *On Law, Morality, and Politics*. 2nd ed. Translated by Richard J. Regan. Hackett, 2003.  
Marsilius of Padua. *Defensor pacis*. Translated by Alan Gewirth. Columbia Univ. Press, 2001.  
Alfarabi. *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*. Rev. ed. Translated by Muhsin Mahdi. Cornell Univ. Press, 2002.

B. Recommended translations of the Bible are the New American Standard Bible (updated edition) and the English Standard Version.

C. Excerpts from the Koran will be at the library on electronic reserve: the edition used is *The Qur'an*, translated by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).

**Schedule of Readings:**

**Introduction**

Tu Jan 22 Aristotelian philosophy  
Th Jan 24 Aristotelian philosophy

**I. Jewish Political Thought**

Tu Jan 29 Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis 1:1—3:24, 11:27—25:11; Exodus 1:1—25:9, 31:12—35:3, 40:1-38; Leviticus 1:1—7:38; Deuteronomy 27:1—32:47  
Th Jan 31 Hebrew Scriptures: Ecclesiastes (entire); Isaiah 1:1—5:30, 11:1-10, 28:1—35:10, 49:1—53:12; Habakkuk 1:1—2:20  
Tu Feb 5 Moses Maimonides, *Logic and Guide of the Perplexed* (L&M, pp. 188-226)  
Th Feb 7 Moses Maimonides, *Letter on Astrology* (L&M, pp. 227-36)  
Tu Feb 12 Albo, *Book of Roots*, and Abravanel, *Commentary on the Bible* (L&M, pp. 237-70)

## II. Christian Political Thought

- Th Feb 14 New Testament: Gospel of Matthew 5:1—7:29; Gospel of John (entire)
- Tu Feb 19 New Testament: Romans 1:1—7:25, 12:1—15:13; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 15:1-58;  
**paper #1 due**
- Th Feb 21 Augustine, *Retractations* (pp. 1-2) and *City of God* (pp. 3, 13-23, 30-48, 52-58, 71-72)
- Tu Feb 26 Augustine, *City of God* (pp. 78, 83, 92, 95-115, 123, 130, 140-64, 175, 184-92, 195-201)
- Th Feb 28 Guest lecture on the Bible
- Tu Mar 4 Augustine, The Compatibility of Christianity and Politics (pp. 202-12), Law and Self-Defense (pp. 213-17), War (pp. 218-29), The Use of Persecution (pp. 230-247), Property (pp. 248-49)
- Th Mar 6 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (*On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 10-40)
- Tu Mar 11 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (*On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 40-75)
- Th Mar 13 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (*On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 76-96)
- Tu Mar 18 No class (spring recess)
- Th Mar 20 No class (spring recess)
- Tu Mar 25 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* and *On Kingship* (*On Law, Morality, and Politics*, pp. 197-203, 97-123, 203-10)
- Th Mar 27 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* (pp. 3-26)
- Tu Apr 1 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* (pp. 27-49); **paper #2 due**
- Th Apr 3 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* (pp. 49-80)
- Tu Apr 8 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* (pp. 80-97, 156-63)
- Th Apr 10 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* (pp. 187-95, 274-79)
- Tu Apr 15 **In-class examination**

## III. Muslim Political Thought

- Th Apr 17 *The Qur'an*, Sura 2 (pp. 4-33) (on electronic reserve at library)
- Tu Apr 22 *The Qur'an*, Suras 4, 9, and 24 (pp. 50-66, 116-27, 220-26) (on electronic reserve at library)
- Th Apr 24 Alfarabi, *The Enumeration of the Sciences and The Political Regime* (L&M, pp. 22-57)
- Tu Apr 29 Alfarabi, *The Attainment of Happiness (Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle)*, pp. 13-50)
- Th May 1 Alfarabi, *The Philosophy of Plato, . . . (Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle)*, pp. 53-67), *Plato's Laws* (L&M, pp. 83-94)
- Tu May 6 Avicenna, *On the Divisions of the Rational Sciences, Healing: Metaphysics X*, and *On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophets' Symbols and Metaphors* (L&M, pp. 95-121)
- Th May 8 Averröes, *The Decisive Treatise, Determining What the Connection Is between Religion and Philosophy* (L&M, pp. 163-86)

**Final examination: Tu May 13, 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

### Format:

Most sessions will combine lecture and discussion. It is imperative, therefore, that you come to class having done the assigned reading for that day. A superior method of preparation is to read the material twice: first fairly quickly in order to grasp the direction of the argument, then slowly and thoroughly, taking notes as you go. A list of questions for discussion is available at <<http://faculty.unlv.edu/dfott/>> (free Adobe Reader required).

## **Assignments:**

Written assignments include:

1. Two interpretive, analytical papers concerning the assigned readings (not primarily research papers) of 5 to 7 pages each. Topics will be assigned. Of the two papers, the one with the higher grade will count for 25% of your final grade, and the one with the lower grade 20%. The papers will be due at the beginning of class on the dates specified.
2. In-class examination, which will count for 20% of your final grade.
3. Final examination, which will count for 35% of your final grade. The in-class and final examinations will consist primarily or exclusively of essay questions.

You must complete all written assignments in order to pass the course. Your contribution in class may increase the grade on one of the assignments by one increment (e.g., from B to B+). Your grade may be reduced if you have more than two unexcused absences; lateness normally counts as an absence.

Extensions for submitting papers will be granted only in cases of emergency (e.g., personal illness, preferably with a note from a doctor; serious illness in one's family). The grade on a paper will be reduced by one increment for each day the paper is late without an approved extension (e.g., a paper of B+ quality will receive a B if it is one day late; a paper of B quality will receive a B-/C+ if it is two days late).

## **Other Information:**

The university requires all members of the university community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. The offense of plagiarism is one kind of violation of copyright requirements. YOU ARE INDIVIDUALLY AND SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLATIONS OF COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE LAWS. THE UNIVERSITY WILL NEITHER PROTECT NOR DEFEND YOU NOR ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIOLATIONS OF FAIR USE LAWS. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under university policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the university encourages you to visit <<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>>.

By UNLV policy for the sake of students' privacy, faculty should send e-mail to students only via students' Rebelmail accounts. Please use that account to send me e-mail; if you use another account I will use my discretion in deciding whether to respond. For information see <<http://rebelmail.unlv.edu>>.

If you use a computer to take notes in class, I reserve the right to require you to send me by e-mail (via your Rebelmail account) a copy of your notes within twelve hours of a particular class. Failure to do so will result in a penalty of the grade.

Use of any other electronic device in class, except with prior permission, is prohibited and will be considered the equivalent of an absence for that class.

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for coordination of services. DRC is located in the Student Services Complex, room 137. The telephone number is 895-0866 (TTY 895-0652).