

# POSC 2801: Justice and Power

Professor Darrell Dobbs  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Office: 421 Wehr Physics

Marquette University, Fall Term 2020  
Class Times: 9:30-10:45; 11:00-12:15 T TH  
Classroom: Online via Teams

## Course Rationale

Think of justice, power, and authority as the ABCs of politics. Without a firm grip on these elementary principles, you can no more expect to discern the true significance of political events than an illiterate can expect to read *Hamlet*. Yet many journalists, academics, and government officials believe that justice is nothing more than a social construct, that power is measured not by the good it can achieve but merely by its forcefulness, and that authority exists only when someone with whom *they* agree possesses power. Our task in this introductory course in political philosophy is to question these beliefs and to explore an alternative possibility: viz., that there exists an objective, natural and rationally accessible standard in accordance with which we may learn to distinguish justice and genuine authority from injustice and brute force.

## Policies, Expectations, and Grading

You are expected to attend every meeting of this class, to arrive on time and to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. As you prepare for class, remember that wisdom awaits the diligent seeker. So, read carefully! Grades will be based on: 1) four short papers that you will present to the class on readings specifically assigned to you as a member of a company of “text detectives” (40%); 2) your attendance, punctuality, and contribution to the quality of class discussion (40%); and 3) a comprehensive final essay or exam (20%). Absences may be excused by emailed request, time-stamped prior to class time on the day of your absence. Count on spending *an average* of five hours per week outside of class preparing for discussion and preparing your assignments.

## Class Schedule

### I. Introductions

Week 1      Introductions and discussion of course goals and our syllabus

### II. Pedagogical Groundwork

Week 2      Exploratory Questions on Justice, Equality, and Liberty

Week 3      Fr. Guido, *5-Minute University*, Plato, *Republic* 514a1-519b6; Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning*

### III. The Fundamental Principles of Justice: Natural Right and Natural Law

Weeks 4-6      Plato, *Republic* 327a1-331d7 (*Alpha*); 331d8-336a8 (*Bravo*); 336a9-343a2 (*Charley*); 343a3-347e7 (*Delta*);  
Plato, *Republic* 348a1-350d5 (*Echo*); 350d6-354c3 (*Alpha*)

Weeks 7-9      Aquinas, Q.91 a.2 (*Bravo*); Q.94 a.2 (*Charley*); Q.94 a.4 (*Delta*); Q.94 a.5 (*Echo*);  
Aquinas, Q.95 a.2 (*Alpha*); Q.96 a.2 (*Bravo*)

### IV. Justice & Power in Political Practice

Week 10      Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* I.66-88 (*Charley*); V.84-116 (*Delta*)

Week 11      Machiavelli, *The Prince* chs.1, 6 & 8 (*Echo*); Machiavelli, chs.15-17 (*Alpha*)

Week 12      Hobbes, *Leviathan* ch.13 (*Bravo*); Hobbes, *Leviathan* ch.14 (*Charley*)

Week 13      Locke, 2<sup>nd</sup> *Treatise of Government* ch.5 (*Delta*); Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* (*Echo*)

Week 14      *The Northwest Ordinance of 1787* & Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*