

PHILOSOPHY 3120-001: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2006

Professor Martin D. Yaffe, ENV 310N
Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00

MWF 10:00-10:50
GAB 310

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

We shall examine the philosophical implications of four controversial social and political issues nowadays, by looking at four plays by William Shakespeare—on antisemitism (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1597), racism (*Othello*, 1604), feminism (*The Taming of the Shrew*, 1593) and elitism (*The Tempest*, 1611), respectively.

To help us see the timeless political and philosophical dimensions of these plays, we shall compare each with an appropriate non-Shakespearean work: *The Merchant of Venice* with Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1590), *Othello* with some speeches by Abraham Lincoln, *The Taming of the Shrew* with Niccolò Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (1518), and *The Tempest* with Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513).

This course requires first-hand reading, careful writing and close textual analysis. Give-and-take class discussion is indispensable.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

- A. Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Edited by A.R. Braunmuller. New York: Pelican, 2000.
Marlowe, Christopher. *The Complete Plays*. Edited by J.B. Steane. New York: Pelican, 1986.
- B. Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Edited by R. McDonald. New York: Penguin, 2000.
Lincoln, Abraham. *Selected Speeches and Writings*. Edited by G. Vidal. New York: First Vintage, 1991.
- C. Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Edited by S. Orgel. New York: Pelican, 2000.
Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Mandragola*. Translated by M. Flaumenhaft. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland, 1981.
- D. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Edited by P. Holland. New York: Pelican, 1999.
Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Translated by H. C. Mansfield. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

III. ADDITIONAL TEXT

Harbrace Handbook. 15th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2003.
—or any comparable authority concerning grammar and style

IV. OPTIONAL TEXTS

- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Edited by S. Orgel. New York: Pelican, 2000.
- Blits, Jan. *The Soul of Athens: Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003.
- DeAlvarez, Leo Paul. *The Machiavellian Enterprise: A Commentary on The Prince*. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999.
- Guelzo, Alan. *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Guelzo, Alan. *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Translated by H.C. Mansfield and D. Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Yaffe, Martin D. *Shylock and the Jewish Question*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Daily (almost) reading quizzes or investigative reports (acceptable in specified format only) are worth approximately one-third of your course grade. These may be supplemented by optional oral and written reports (for extra credit).
2. There are midterm and final take-home essay-examinations, each worth approximately one-third of your course grade. You must earn passing grades in both examinations to pass the course.
3. Regular and punctual attendance is required. Absentees may be penalized.

VI. SPECIFICATIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK, ETC.

1. All examinations or investigative reports, etc., must be submitted in hard-copy, using standard 12-point font, with a single title-page clearly listing the following information *only*: course number and title, instructor (including formal title), date, name of assignment (exactly as found on the assignment instructions), and student's name and student-number.
2. Use one surface of a page only.
3. Leave one-inch margins on all sides of each page for comments.
4. Double-space everything, *including title-page*.
5. Spelling counts. So does grammar. Our authority is *Harbrace Handbook*, 15th ed. On the need for correct punctuation, see Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (New York: Gotham, 2004). On the need for plain, jargon-free, non-ideologized language, see Diane Ravitch, *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (New York: Vintage, 2003).
6. Footnote citations, etc., are needed where you are relying directly on another's published work. You are expected to be familiar with UNT's policies concerning academic dishonesty: http://www.unt.edu/policy/UNT_Policy/volume3/18_1_11.html.
7. When you are citing works that have standard reference formats, you *must* use those formats exclusively.
8. Carelessness or sloppiness counts against you. The burden is first and foremost on the writer to make things reasonably clear. If your writing skills do not yet meet the minimum requirements for college-level work, you may contact the Writing Lab for remedial help.
9. *Assignments that are deficient in any of the aforementioned ways may be returned with a grade of F or D*, at the instructor's discretion. The instructor may offer to read a suitably revised assignment for a possibly improved grade. If so, the revised assignment will be treated as a late submission. (See item 10, below.)
10. Every effort will be made to return written assignments by the next class period. Late submissions will be accepted if they are handed in *before* the due date for the next assignment, but they will then be graded without comments and made available at the instructor's office at his convenience. Responsibility for retrieving late submissions, etc., rests entirely with the student.
11. Photocopies of handouts you may have missed will be made available to you on request at the reception desk in ENV 225.
12. Generally speaking, the instructor does not return phone calls. Please feel free, however, to leave a clear and concise message at 940-565-2259 (voicemail) or yaffe@unt.edu (e-mail). Every effort will be made to answer e-mail messages promptly.