

POL485H1F/POL2027H1F

Plutarch's Prism

Fall 2015, Wednesday 12 to 2 in UC 257

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Course description:

The course explores some of the multiple ways in which Plutarch's work was incorporated into early modern political thought with particular emphasis on the French tradition from 1500 to 1800. Thinkers studied include John of Salisbury, Claude de Seyssel, Guillaume Budé, Michel de Montaigne, Montesquieu, Rousseau and French revolutionaries. The exploration of the development of political thought through this lens will raise questions and challenges vis-à-vis traditional frameworks for interpreting the development of early-modern political theory (e.g. republicanism vs. monarchy, Stoics vs. Epicureans).

Objectives:

There are three objectives for this course. The first is to introduce students to some of the main themes in Plutarch's (and pseudo-Plutarch) work. Plutarch has been a major influence on the development of Western political theory but there has been very little scholarship unpacking the significance of his place in this development. It is important to explore because it is a way to help us construct a new perspective on the development of political thinking in the West. We will begin with a few readings from Plutarch's own opus to acquaint students with some of the main themes of his work.

The second objective of the course is to develop a framework to understand the various ways in which Plutarch's work was taken up and used as a source for a number of debates in political theory and history in the early-modern period. Plutarch's work has been incorporated into early modern political thought, either through translators who went on to write political treatises or translations used and cited by writers of canonical political texts of the early-modern period. As we will see, the patterns demonstrated by looking at the history of Plutarch's reception raises important challenges for traditional frameworks for interpreting the development of early-modern political theory (e.g. republicanism vs. monarchy, Stoics vs. Epicureans).

The overview of appropriations/reception of Plutarch here is not meant to be comprehensive (though you are open to explore some of those avenues in your own research in the context of the final essay). There are a number of important gaps- including Shakespeare,

More, Harrington and others. This objective then does not require that we paint the most detailed picture of the uses of Plutarch's work, but rather that we develop a more schematic account of his most important uses for purposes of the tradition of political thought and largely from a French perspective.

The third objective of the course is to offer a structure that allows us to reflect in a deeper way on the mechanisms and significance of cultural appropriation via the work of translation and interpretation. In general terms, this is relevant to any moral and political doctrine that claims to have universal validity across and through linguistic and cultural borders.

Structure:

The course will begin with the reading of a few select essays and lives from Plutarch's larger opus in order to acquaint students with some of the main themes and issues addressed in his work (no previous knowledge of Plutarch's work is assumed). We will then explore some of the work commonly attributed to pseudo-Plutarch to reflect on the rather complicated history of cultural appropriation in the history of Western thought. On October 21 we will hold a class in the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library to explore some of the extant editions of translations of Plutarch by political theorists in the early-modern period, reflecting on how to approach these texts for a study in the history of political thought and paying particular attention to the forewords and contexts in which these translations were carried out. The rest of the course will be devoted to the study of a number of isolated pieces in the canon of early-modern and modern political thought where reference to Plutarch and his work plays an important role.

Course Requirements:

Short paper (3-4 pp. instructions below) due October 28 th	15%
Seminar Presentation on the week of your choice (10-15 minutes for undergraduates and 20-30 minutes for graduate students)	20%
Term paper (undergraduates 15 pp., graduate students 20-25 pp.) due December 2 nd	50%
Participation	15%

Short paper instructions:

The purpose of this paper is to broaden and deepen your understanding of Plutarch's own political writing. You have one of two options.

- 1) Choose two of the lives of the Greeks and Romans compared by Plutarch in his work The Lives (e.g. Romulus and Theseus) or one or two of Plutarch's moral essays on ethical (e.g. Stoics and Epicureans) or political theory, and provide an analysis of the work highlighting the message and significance of the work. You are not required to consult secondary sources in your analysis, although some graduate students may find that it may help to couch their analysis in wider debates in classics, philosophy and political theory.

- 2) Comparative Translation Exercise: Choose 1-2 paragraphs of one of Plutarch's Lives or moral essays and compare the translation from two early-modern or modern translations of the text. Knowledge of the original Greek may be helpful but not necessary.

The paper should be 3-4 pp. double-spaced and standard bibliographic and footnote notation is required. Penalties for late papers are 2% a day including weekends.

Seminar presentation:

Students will do a presentation on the week of their choice (undergraduates 10-15 minutes, graduate students 20-30 minutes) related to the reading assigned for that week. The presentation is meant to serve as an opportunity for you to try out some of the ideas that will inform your final paper.

Term paper:

Please consult with me about your topic before starting your term paper. Your seminar presentation can also serve as an opportunity for feedback on your choice of a topic. I suggest here a few options for your paper. The first option is to focus on one theme of Plutarch's work (e.g. political leadership, citizenship, Sparta), or one historical figure covered in his Lives and explore its place through two or more texts in the history of political thought of the early-modern and modern period. This will allow you to do a work of comparison, looking at how the reflections of Plutarch were taken up and used in different ways in the history of ideas. A second option is to focus on one thinker in the history of political thought (e.g. Montaigne, Machiavelli, Rousseau) and to explore their work through their translations and/or use of Plutarch paying attention to the context and significance of their recourse to Plutarch's work. A third option, in a broader perspective, is to reflect on how a view of the development of early-modern and modern political thought through the lens of Plutarch either reinforces or challenges one of the standard accounts of the development of this thought, be it through the work of J.G.A. Pocock (The Machiavellian Moment), Quentin Skinner (The Foundations of Modern Political Thought), Nannerl Keohane (Philosophy and the State in France) or Christopher Brooke (Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau). This third option is perhaps better suited for a graduate student or an advanced undergraduate student looking to do graduate work in the field.

Of course, standard bibliographic and footnote citations are required. To help guard against plagiarism, students will be required to hand in their papers via turnitin.com. Late penalties are 2% a day, including weekends.

As required by the university, here are the terms of use for turnitin.com: "Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site."

Required Readings:

In terms of reading Plutarch, the essays and lives that are assigned on the reading list are all found in the public domain online. There is a very limited selection of his essays in translation in a 1992 Penguin edition edited by Ian Kidd (translation by Robin Waterfield), so you may wish to purchase that for a printed version of some of his more famous essays. In addition, there are paperback editions of both Roman Lives and Greek Lives in Oxford World Classics, but these have taken the lives out of their original comparative structure as written by Plutarch. I would suggest that in reading the Lives you do so through their original comparative structure. There are many used editions of Plutarch English translations, e.g. the John Dryden translation of Plutarch's Lives. These can be purchased at minimal cost through www.abebooks.com. In terms of other works in French political thought, I will try to scan and upload them to the Blackboard site.

Course Outline and Weekly Readings (subject to some revision over the course of the semester):

Week 1 (September 16th)

-Introduction: Competing paradigms for thinking about the development of political thought in the early-modern period

Week 2 (September 23rd)

- Approaches to studying classical themes in early-modern thought and the political theory of Plutarch's *Moralia*

-broad themes in Plutarch: individual ethics/virtue (anti-Stoic and anti-Epicurean), public ethics, leadership, war, religion, history and time

-Read:

-Plutarch, "How a Man may become aware of his progress in virtue," *Moralia* I (can be found online here:

http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/plutarch/moralia/how_a_man_may_become_aware_of_his_progress_in_virtue.htm), "How to Profit from one's Enemies" *Moralia* II (can be found online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/De_capienda*.html), "On the Fortune or the virtue of Alexander," *Moralia* IV

(can be found online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Fortuna_Alexandri*/home.html)

and "On Stoic Self-Contradictions" *Moralia* XIII (can be found online here:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0389%3Asection%3D1>)

Week 3 (September 30th)

- Introduction to Plutarch's *Lives*

-Read:

-Plutarch, "Theseus", "Romulus", "The Comparison of Romulus with Theseus"; "Lycurgus", "Numa Pompilius" and "The Comparison of Numa with Lycurgus"; and "Demosthenes", "Cicero" and "The Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero"

-all these lives and comparisons can be found online at this site: <http://classics.mit.edu/Browse/browse-Plutarch.html> (in the Dryden translation)

-recommended also is Philip Stadter's "Character in Politics," In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. R. Balot, Blackwell, 2009, pp. 456-470. It is available on the UTOR library system online.

Week 4 (October 7th)

-The Challenges of 'Pseudo-Plutarch'

-Read:

-John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book V. Available on Blackboard.

-[Plutarch], "The Shorter Life (54A)" In *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, eds. J.J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996, pp. 55-65. Available on Blackboard.

-H. Liebeschütz, "John of Salisbury and Pseudo-Plutarch," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 6 (1943), pp. 33-39. Available through the UTOR library system.

Week 5 (October 14th)

-An exploration of translators and translations of Plutarch in the early-modern period including Amyot (1513-1593)

Read:

-Jacques Amyot, "Preface" to Plutarch's *Vies des hommes illustres* (1579) and *Opera Moralia* (1572). Available on Blackboard.

Week 6 (October 21st)

-Visit to Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library

Week 7 (October 28th)

- **Short paper due (see instructions above)**

-Renaissance Princes and Plutarch: Erasmus (1466-1536) and Bude (1467-1540)

-Read:

-Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), available online here:

http://www.stoics.com/erasmus_s_education_of_a_chris.html

- Bude, *L'Institution du prince* (1547). If you read French you can consult an edition at the library or I may provide one through Blackboard.

Week 8 (November 4th)

-Renaissance Princes and Plutarch con't: Seyssel (1450-1520) and Machiavelli (1496-1527)

-Read:

-Claude de Seyssel, *The Monarchy of France* (1519). On Blackboard.

-Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

Week 9 (November 11th)

- Plutarch historian and moralist: Montaigne (1533-1592), Bodin and La Boetie (1530-1563)

-Read:

-Montaigne. *Essays*, Book II, chapter 32 and other passages to be determined to be posted on Blackboard.

-Bodin, *Method for Easy Comprehension of History* (1566)- available on googlebooks at http://books.google.ca/books/about/Method_for_the_easy_comprehension_of_his.html?id=kvUBAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y (and select passages available on Blackboard)

-Etienne de la Boetie's commentary on Plutarch's essay "de l'amour" –available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5700993f/f1.image> OR *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*- there is a 2012 Hackett edition that might be useful for you

to acquire and I will make relevant passages available on Blackboard.

-also possibly Estienne Pasquier (1529-1615) who translated five essays of Plutarch

Week 10 (November 18th)

- Enlightenment Plutarch: Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Hamilton (1755-1804)

-Read:

-Montesquieu, *Considerations* (1734) and selections from *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) to be determined and posted on Blackboard.

-Philip Stadter, "Alexander Hamilton's notes on Plutarch in his Pay Book," *The Review of Politics* 73(2011), 199-217- accessible on the UTOR library system:

http://journals2.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/pdf/00346705/v73i0002/199_ahnopihib.xml

Week 11 (November 25th)

-Enlightenment Plutarch: Rousseau (1712-1778)

-Read:

-Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762) and selections from *Emile* (1762)

Week 12 (December 2nd)

-Final paper due (see instructions above)

-Revolutionary Plutarch

-Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, "Plutarch's Gracchi on the French, English and Irish stages 1792-1852," unpublished paper delivered at the conference The Afterlife of Plutarch at the Warburg Institute, May 2013

http://www.classicsandclass.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/cw_001.pdf – for a video version of the talk click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc1Yzpqo04A>

- Sanja Perovic, "Other People's Lives: Exemplary History and the French Revolution," *Literature & History* 21.2 (Autumn 2012): 16-31, available through the UTOR library system online.

-Melissa Lane, "The Origin of the Statesman-Demagogue Distinction in and after ancient Athens," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 73, Number 2, April 2012, pp.179-200, available through the UTOR library system online.