

POL485H1S/POL2027H1S

Plutarch's Prism: parallel readings in the history of political thought

Winter 2018

Thursday 2-4 pm, in Teefy Hall 203

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Course description:

The course explores a few of the ways in which Plutarch's work was incorporated into early modern political thought with particular emphasis on French and English thinkers from 1500 to 1800. The course is structured according to a similar structural feature used by Plutarch himself in his *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch pitted the life of one important classical figure against another in order to highlight their similarities and differences and to lead his readers to think about the qualities that help to constitute good and poor political action. In this course we will pit several important texts in the history of political thought against a piece of Plutarch's work so as to inspire reflection on the play of Plutarchan themes in the history of political thought. In addition to Plutarch, thinkers to be (re)read over the course of the semester include Thomas More, Erasmus, Guillaume Budé, Claude de Seyssel, Michel de Montaigne, Hobbes and Rousseau. The exploration of the development of political thought through this lens also will raise questions and challenges vis-à-vis traditional frameworks for interpreting the development of early-modern political theory and its relation to classical themes (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 Europe. 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, partly through translators who went on to write political treatises and partly by authors drawing on those translations and citing them in their canonical political texts. The patterns demonstrated by looking at the history of Plutarch's reception raises 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 final essay). There are a number of important gaps not directly covered by this syllabus—including Shakespeare, Harrington and others. We will not paint a fully comprehensive picture of the uses of Plutarch's work (which would require multiple years of study), but rather we will develop an understanding of his most important uses for key political thinkers in England and France. We should also be open to the possibility that not all who took up Plutarch in the history of political thought took him up in the same spirit or in the same way, so there may be tensions and even contradictions in the uses of Plutarch in the thinkers and traditions we will study.

The third objective of the course is to provide an opportunity to reflect in a deeper way on the mechanisms and significance of cultural appropriation via the work of translation and interpretation, especially in relation to classical thought and its role in the development of Western political thought.

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. In the first half of the semester I am hoping to 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 (stay tuned for more details concerning the visit). 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 which we will read in tandem with a relevant piece of Plutarch's own work.

Course Requirements:

Short paper (3-4 pp. instructions below) due March 1 st	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 March 29 th	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 or 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. Here are a few options for your paper but you are welcome to follow other themes or approaches as long as you consult with me about it ahead of time. The first option is to focus on one theme of Plutarch's work (e.g. his conception of public service, political leadership, citizenship, Sparta, civil religion), or on one historical figure covered in his Lives (e.g. Brutus, Alexander, Alcibiades) and explore its iteration in 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 one aspect of the work of Plutarch was 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, Nietzsche) and to explore their work through their 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. A large number of the earlier English translations and adaptations can be found online through such databases as Early English Books online. In addition, you can find links to a number of these translations through the Universal Short Title Catalogue.

There are two secondary works which could prove to be of use to students. The first is a monograph (i.e. single authored book) by Hugh Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics. Between City and Empire* (Cambridge UK: CUP, 2016) and the second an edited volume that seeks a fairly comprehensive coverage of the breadth of contemporary scholarship on Plutarch, Mark Beck, ed. *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014). Liebert, a political theorist, advances what I consider to be a somewhat controversial thesis regarding the centrality of the Spartan model as a key to Plutarch's politics and literary work. Beck offers an array of articles by leading classical scholars on the meaning and significance of Plutarch's work, as well as on various aspects of Plutarch reception.

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

Week 1 (January 4th) - ***Introduction***

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

Week 2 (January 11th) - ***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), "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) , "Adversus Colotem (can be found online here: <http://www.epicurus.net/en/colotes.html>) and "Sayings of Kings and Commanders" (sometimes also called the Apophthegmata). While the text of the latter can be found starting at the link noted here, I am not asking that you read this last text in its entirety but selections of your choice that may be of interest to you (here is the link:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0193%3Achapter%3Dintro%3Asection%3D1>)

Week 3 (January 18th) - ***Introduction to Plutarch's Lives***

-Read:

-Plutarch, "Demosthenes", "Cicero" and "The Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero"; "Coriolanus", "Cato the Younger".

-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 (January 25th)- ***Plutarch tutor to Trajan: the secret history of Plutarch and the presence of pseudo-Plutarch***

-Read:

-John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book V. 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.

-pseudo-Plutarch, "The Education of Children", available online here:
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/De_liberis_educandis*.html

Week 5 (February 1st)- Class in the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library

Week 6 (February 8th)- ***Reading Plutarch in parallel: "How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend" with Erasmus (1466-1536)***

-Read:

-Plutarch, "How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend", available online here:

http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/plutarch/moralia/how_to_tell_a_flatterer_from_a_friend.htm

-in parallel with Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), chapters 1 and 2 available online here:

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

Week 7 (February 15th) – ***Parallel Princes: Plutarch's Lives of Alexander and Caesar and Machiavelli's Prince***

-Read:

-Plutarch, "Lives of Alexander and Caesar", available online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/alexander*/3.html and

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/caesar*.html

-In parallel with Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513) (any edition is suitable). Passages to be determined.

Week 8 (February 22nd) - **Reading week (no class)**

Week 9 (March 1st) – **Short paper due (see above for instructions!)**

– ***Parallel republics-Plutarch in 16th century England harnessed for a politics of the commonwealth***

-Read:

-Plutarch, “Life of Lycurgus”, available online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/lycurgus*.html

-In parallel with Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Clarence Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), first published 1516 and available online through the University of Toronto website at <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=3421375>

Week 10 (March 8th) --***Plutarch historian and moralist- debates on historical method: Amyot (1513-1592), Montaigne (1533-1592), and Bodin (1530-1596)***

-Read:

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

-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)

Week 11 (March 15th)-***Plutarch in parallel with Hobbes***

Read:

-Plutarch, “How to Profit by one’s Enemies” available online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/moralia/de_ca_pienda*.html

-In parallel with Hobbes, *Leviathan*, esp. Part I, chaps. 10-13 (any edition is suitable). This reading of Hobbes juxtaposed with Plutarch draws on a

stream of interpretation that reads Hobbes as a virtue theorist (i.e. as a thinker who is more interested in the questions of individual character and civility than as a defender of egoistic self-interest)- various interpreters associated with that reading of Hobbes include P. Berkowitz and Ewin.

Week 12 (March 22nd)- *Plutarch in parallel on morality and politics in the age of Enlightenment*

-Read:

-Plutarch, “Life of Phocion” available online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/phocion*.html

-In parallel with Mably, *Phocion’s Conversations* (1763) available online here:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=8q5XAAAcAAJ&pg=PA106&lpg=PA106&dq=manly+phocion+conversations&source=bl&ots=lzKml5zD_0&sig=4hv4MWRdFyCzZNP2qpMhs5QCHPw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjR15Lv47zYAhVL9IMKHbHmA5cQ6AEILDAB#v=onepage&q=manly%20phocion%20conversations&f=false

Week 13 (March 29th) – -*******FINAL PAPER DUE** (see instructions above)

-Plutarch in parallel with Rousseau (1712-1778)

-Read:

-Plutarch, “To an Uneducated Ruler” and “Life of Brutus”, available online here:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Ad_principem_ineruditum*.html and

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/brutus*.html .

-In parallel with Rousseau, *First Discourse*, selections (to be determined) from *Julie* (1761), *Emile* (1762) and the *Confessions* (1769)