

GOV 382M  
Xenophon and Machiavelli on Political Ambition  
Lorraine Pangle  
Spring 2013

Class: MW 2-3:30

Batts 1.104

E-mail: [lsp226@gov.utexas.edu](mailto:lsp226@gov.utexas.edu)

Office: Mezes 3.134

Office hours:

individual consultation: M 3:30-5, Th 11-12:30

open office hours: Th 1:30-2:30

Office phone: 232-1447

### Course Description:

This course will consist in a close reading of Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* and selections from his *Memorabilia*, followed by Machiavelli's *Discourses* and selections from his *Prince*. In the *Education of Cyrus* we have Xenophon's rich fictional depiction of a virtuous ancient polis and the process by which a talented man of boundless ambition might easily subvert it. In place of the virtuous republic, Xenophon's Cyrus creates a progressive, dynamic, multi-ethnic society, aimed at wealth and expansion and glory, in which merit is rewarded and a self-sacrificing view of justice is replaced by a frank pursuit of the good things of this world. Yet in exploring this entrancing vision, Xenophon gives clear reasons why, in the end, he rejects it as the best model for a healthy society. Machiavelli had the highest opinion of Xenophon and gave all his works the closest study. Yet he came to the opposite conclusion from Xenophon, and devoted his writings to promoting the progressive, expansive political vision and the embrace of ambition that Xenophon had rejected. What did Machiavelli see that Xenophon did not, or what did Xenophon see that Machiavelli did not? How can these contrasting works help us understand and assess the deepest differences between ancient and modern republicanism and the fundamental presuppositions of modern liberalism?

### Texts:

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Mansfield, Chicago, ISBN 0-226-50036-5.

Machiavelli, *Prince*, trans. Mansfield, Chicago, ISBN 0-226-50038-1.

Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, trans. Ambler, Cornell University Press, ISBN 0-8014-8750-1.

Xenophon, *Memorabilia of Socrates*, trans. Bonnette, Cornell University Press, ISBN 0-8014-8171-6.

Recommended: Livy, *History of Rome*, first 10 books.

## Course Requirements and Grading Policy:

3 short papers (maximum 500 words) on a passage not yet discussed in class, due at the beginning of class on the following Mondays: January 21; either Feb. 4 or Feb. 18; and either March 4 or March 18. (7% each).

3 question sets, elucidating a few of the most important problems in a section of the text not yet discussed in class. The first is to be submitted by e-mail before 8 am on Jan. 28 or 30; the second is due before 8 am on Feb. 11, 13, 25, or 27; and the third is due before 8 am on March 11, 13, 25 or 27 (7% each).

Term paper of 10-15 pages on a topic of your choosing, due in my office Monday, May 14 by 5 pm: 40%. Extensions will be granted only in cases of documented illness and equivalent emergencies.

Class Participation: 18%.

## Question Set Guidelines

- (1) Questions should be answerable from within the text.
- (3) Questions should be honest. If you think you already know the answer to your question, then you should challenge yourself to ask another question.
- (2) Questions should be trying to get to something important for a thoughtful interpretation of the text. One should be able to explain why the question is important and have a thought about how the answer to it might influence our interpretation of the book.
- (4) Questions should be connected explicitly to a quoted or cited section of text.

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