

**Code: SPS/02**

**Credits: 8**

**Matter: History of Political Thought**

**Main language of instruction: Italian**

**Other language of instruction: English**

## **Teaching Staff**

### **Head instructor**

**Prof. Alberto Clerici - [alberto.clerici@unicusano.it](mailto:alberto.clerici@unicusano.it)**

## **Introduction**

### *1. Objective of the course :*

Aim of the Course is to contribute to the acquisition of basic knowledge in the political-historical field, through the reconstruction of the main trends of western political thought, from its beginnings to 19th century. Particular attention will be paid to a critical examination of the conceptual foundations of modern politics, with special reference to the realm of international relations. The specific aims of the course are to:

- provide a contextualized introduction to the great texts of modern political theory
- examine the meaning and justification of important concepts such as sovereignty, freedom, democracy, State, equality and rights
- explore rival theoretical frameworks such as absolutism, constitutionalism, natural law, liberalism, egalitarianism, and Marxism, through the analysis of classic texts set into their historical and cultural development
- Provide a contextualized discussion of the theoretical foundations of international political and legal thought
- develop critical skills necessary to examine and assess complex historical and theoretical arguments and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

## **Objectives**

### *2. Course Structure:*

The Course is divided in six learning units. The topics covered include:

Ancient political thought; Plato; Aristotle, Polybius. Christian political thought; Augustine; Thomas Aquinas. Early modern political thought: Machiavelli; Bodin; Natural law theory and social contract theory: Hobbes, Locke. 18th century political thought: Montesquieu; Rousseau; Freedom and equality in post-revolutionary political thought: Tocqueville; Marx and historical materialism; elitism and parliamentary government: Mosca.

History and theory of International relations: ancient slavery, theory of climates; Roman natural law: Cicero, Gaius and Ulpianus; Just war theory in the middle ages; Sovereignty in the middle ages; Christianity and Islam: Nicholas of Cusa; Humanism, war and peace: Erasmus and Thomas More; The conquest of the New World: Columbus, Cortes, Las Casas, Vitoria.

To influence the rigor of learning the course contains a practical part consisting of activities provided in the e-learning platform, usually a contextualized comment of a quotation from one of the authors studied in the Course.

### **Competencies:**

To get the student acquainted with the “vocabulary” of politics, stressing affinities and differences between past and present political theories. Also, to study the intellectual context of the classic texts and authors of western political thought. At the end of the course, and having completed the course materials, activities and essential reading, you will be able to:

- demonstrate a familiarity with main ideas of the thinkers discussed in the subject guide, as related to their historical and cultural context
- provide an account of the main concepts used by the thinkers covered on the course
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments employed in the theories studied inside the debates of each given historical period.
- Recognize affinities and differences between past and present political thought
- Understand the origins and development of international legal and political thought

### **Syllabus**

#### *3. Programme of the course:*

**Subject 1. Ancient and medieval political thought**

**Subject 2. Early modern political thought (1500-1600)**

**Subject 3. Modern political thought (1700-1800)**

**Subject 4. Political thought and International relations in the Antiquity**

**Subject 5. Political thought and International relations in the Middle Age**

**Subject 6. Political thought and International relations in Early Modern History**

### **Evaluation system and criteria**

The assessments of course is based on the following criteria:

#### **I) Final written exam (100% of grade):**

This exam will have two parts:

1) An objective test or 3 multiple choice answers. The student should tick the right answer. The wrong answer will less ½ right answer.

This part will assess 20% of the grade.

2) A written test, in which the student should answer to 3 open questions. Each question will correspond to a specific topic covered by the Course lectures. The evaluation of the answers will be determined by the degree of knowledge, training and rigor that is manifested in the response to the question and, not least, also assess the correction in the expression of political language and the precise contextualization of texts and authors.

This part will assess 80% of the grade.

### **Bibliography and resources**

#### *4. Materials to consult:*

- 1) Lectures
- 2) Lecture notes
- 3) Slide
- 4) Self-evaluation tests
- 5) e-tivities

#### *5. Recommended bibliography:*

**1) Ryan, Alan - On politics : A history of political thought from Herodotus to the present - London : Allen Lane , 2012**

**2) System, order, and international law : the early history of international legal thought from Machiavelli to Hegel / edited by Stefan Kadelbach, Thomas Kleinlein and David Roth-Isigkeit. - Oxford : Oxford University press , 2017**