

Course Number

PSC-336-01

Course Description

Political life is centrally about making decisions that may define the fate of entire communities. Where and how do we best prepare to judge, decide, and act wisely? When is it right to obey, and when to disobey the authorities and the law? In the Crito, Socrates offers a bold defense of the laws, which compel him against escaping his death sentence considering the remarkable life they gave him as an Athenian citizen. His escape, they argue, would 'nothing other than destroy us, the laws, and the civic community.' And yet, if Socrates deserves respect for choosing to obey the law at the cost of his own life, we honor people like Martin Luther King for courageously embarking in civil disobedience. In fact, segregation, slavery, South Africa's Apartheid, even the Holocaust were all carried out through legal means. And if doing the right thing may seem obvious in retrospect, determining what to do is not always that simple, amidst conflicting potential outcomes, the lack of information, and confusing accounts. In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle defines phronesis, commonly translated as practical wisdom or prudence, as the eminent political virtue of producing 'right judgments about what is to be done' in concrete, unique, and unrepeatable circumstances with a view of the common good. Necessary to govern well and key in advancing the good life, prudence is contextual. It cannot be reduced to principles of simple transmission nor disciplined by science. Political wisdom seems most needed these days as scientists tell us that the window is rapidly closing to avoid climate catastrophe. Bringing tried and true insight to our unique, unprecedented challenges, drawing on different traditions of political thought with a contemporary edge, this class critically revisits and assesses the possibilities of prudence-both in its classical and contemporary versions-to inform our own political puzzles. This class carries SOCS and WAC credit

Academic Term

22/FA

Instructor

Seri, Guillermina

Location & Meeting Time

Karp Hall-001+ T/TH 10:55AM-12:40PM LEC

Credits

1.00

Capacity

25

Total Students

6

Common Curriculum

SOCS

WAC

GCHF

GSPE

Academic Department

Political Science

Field Of Study

Political Science (PSC)