HISTORY 3510: MACHIAVELLI
Fall Term 2015
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:55-4:10
Prof. J. Najemy (318 McGraw; jmn4@cornell.edu)

This course explores the ideas of the most famous and controversial political theorist in the Western tradition. We begin with the political and cultural context of Machiavelli’s education and his work in the government of the Florentine republic as head of the second chancery, diplomatic envoy, and military reformer. We then examine – in his correspondence, poetry, and especially in The Prince (1513) – the impact on his early political thought of this experience in government and of the republic’s collapse in 1512, an event with traumatic personal consequences for Machiavelli. Although he is best known for the ideas in The Prince, Machiavelli subsequently engaged in a constant process of rethinking and revising those ideas. In the works of his most prolific and creative period from 1515 to 1525 – the Discourses on Livy, the Art of War, the plays Mandragola and Clizia, the Florentine Histories, and more poetry – Machiavelli challenged accepted notions of history and time, of antiquity as a model for imitation, of political agency and the moral imperatives of political leadership, and of the merits and weaknesses of republics and principalities. His analysis of politics increasingly focused on relations between social classes and on how class relations conditioned both forms of government and the possibilities and limits of individual political action. These issues will be explored through close reading and analysis of his writings.

**Texts and books.** We will read Machiavelli in the 3-volume translation by Allan Gilbert, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others* (abbreviated below as *Works*). Print copies should be available at the bookstores. These volumes are also available online: search for “Machiavelli Chief Works” in the library’s online catalog. I recommend purchasing the print copies, but if you prefer to read the texts online, you must bring a computer to the class meetings in which the Gilbert translations are discussed and have the electronic texts open during class. The e-books can be downloaded; ask the librarians if you need help.

The assigned readings include two other books:

*Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence* (abbreviated below as *Correspondence*), translated by James B. Atkinson and David Sices. This book is available only in the print edition and is a **required purchase.**

*The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (abbreviated below as *Companion*), ed. J. M. Najemy, is available both in print and electronic editions, the latter also through the library catalog. Purchase is optional.

**Course Requirements:**

1) **Regular attendance at class meetings and informed participation in discussions (40% of final grade).**

2) **A mid-term paper, due in class on Tuesday, October 20 (20% of final grade):** an analysis, of c. 1500 words, of one chapter of *The Prince* (or a comparison of two chapters) and its/their relationship to one of Machiavelli’s earlier writings. Guidelines will be provided a few weeks before the due date. **Please submit both paper and electronic copies,** the latter as attachments to my email address (see above).

3) **Take-home final exam (40% of final grade), due on or after the day (as yet unannounced) of the course’s scheduled final exam.** Exam questions will be distributed at the last class meeting. The exam will consist of two essays, each between 1500 and 2000 words in length, for a total of between 3000 and 4000 words. Submit **only electronic copies** to my email address.
Schedule of Meetings and Assigned Readings

August 25 and 27: Machiavelli’s Reputation, Education, and Cultural Background


September 1 and 3: Machiavelli’s Experience in Government; Encounter with Cesare Borgia

Robert Black, “Machiavelli in the chancery,” Companion, 31-47
The following, all in Works, vol. 1, 116-169: “Advice to Raffaello Girolami”; “Legations” (to Cesare Borgia); “On the Method of Dealing with the Rebellious Peoples of the Valdichiana”; “A Description of the Method Used by Duke Valentino [Cesare Borgia]”
Correspondence, 3-96

September 8 and 10: The Militia Project and the Beginnings of Political Theory

“Words to be Spoken on the Law for Appropriating Money,” Works, vol. 3, 1439-1443
“A Provision for Infantry,” Works, vol. 1, 3
The “Decennali,” Works, vol. 3, 1444-1462
Correspondence, 97-213 and 426-29 (letter G)

September 15 and 17: Fall of the Republic and Return of the Medici in 1512; Machiavelli’s Ordeal; Correspondence with Francesco Vettori

Correspondence, 214-260 and 424 (letter D)
Sonnets addressed to Giuliano de’ Medici, Works, vol. 2, 1013-1015
Humfrey Butters, “Machiavelli and the Medici,” Companion, 64-79

September 22 and 24: The Prince (1): The Failure of Italy’s Political Leaders

The Prince, in Works, vol. 1, 10-96

September 29 and October 1: The Prince (2): The Redemptive Mission

Wayne A. Rebhorn, “Machiavelli’s Prince in the epic tradition,” Companion, 80-95
Virginia Cox, “Rhetoric and ethics in Machiavelli,” Companion, 173-189
Victoria Kahn, “Machiavelli’s afterlife and reputation,” Companion, 239-255

October 6 and 8: Rethinking The Prince

Correspondence, 260-321

October 15 and 20: The Discourses on Livy (1): Roman Virtù, Class Conflict, and Liberty

Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livy, Dedication, book 1, Works, vol. 1, 188-320
October 22 and 27: The Discourses on Livy (2): Arms, Religion, and Empire

Discourses on Livy, book 2; Works, vol. 1, 321-418
Alison Brown, “Philosophy and religion in Machiavelli,” Companion, 157-172

October 29 and November 3: The Discourses on Livy (3): The interpretation of history

Discourses on Livy, book 3, Works, vol. 1, 419-529
J. G. A. Pocock, “Machiavelli and Rome: the republic as ideal and as history,” Companion, 144-156

November 5: The Art of War

The Art of War, Dedication; book 1 and selections from books 2, 4, 6, and 7, in Works, vol. 2, 566-604, 621-626, 660-662, 689-703, 721-726
Mikael Hörmqvist, “Machiavelli’s Military Project and the Art of War,” Companion, 112-127

November 10 and 12: Machiavelli’s plays: Mandragola and Clizia

Mandragola, Works, vol. 2, 776-821
Clizia, Works, vol. 2, 822-864
Correspondence, selected letters
Ronald L. Martinez, “Comedian, tragedian: Machiavelli and traditions of Renaissance theater,” Companion, 206-222
Barbara Spackman, “Machiavelli and Gender,” Companion, 223-238

November 17: The Asino: an autobiographical poem?

Other poems and comic prose, Works, vol. 2, 865-882, 1016-1021
Albert Ascoli and Angela Matilde Capodivacca, “Machiavelli and Poetry,” Companion, 190-205

November 19: A Plan for the Republic

Correspondence, selected letters

November 24: Historian of Florence

History of Florence, translator’s note; dedication; preface; book 1, chapters 14-39; books 2 and 3, Works, vol. 3, 1027-1033, 1051-1186
Correspondence, selected letters
Anna Maria Cabrini, “Machiavelli’s Florentine Histories,” Companion, 128-143

December 1 and 3: Machiavelli and the Medici

History of Florence, book 4; book 5, chapters 1-4; books 7 and 8, Works, vol. 3, 1187-1238, 1336-1435