

REQUIREMENTS:

- 8-10 pages (2000-2500 words); double-spaced; one-inch margins; 10 or 12 point font.
- Papers must be titled, typed, page-numbered, and stapled. Unstapled papers will not be accepted.
- Papers must include a signed copy of the Gustavus Honor Code.
- No title pages or report covers.

DUE:

- **Introductory Paragraph, Thesis Statement, and Structural Outline:** Tuesday, October 12, in class.
- **Final Draft:** Tuesday, October 19, in class.

Note: “In class” means that you submit the paper to me in class. It does not mean that you slip it under my door later that day. It does not mean that you email it to me that afternoon. It does not mean that you show up to class 20 minutes late because you discovered that the dorm printer was out of ink or paper at 8:15 on October 19th. Plan ahead to avoid printer problems or other delays.

ESSAY EXPECTATIONS:

Your papers should be polished and edited for both content and style. Papers should be well organized and coherently argued and presented. Each substantive point or argument should follow clearly and logically from the previous point. Your essay should exhibit some sort of “narrative thread” running through it. That is, in your introduction, you should state what you are going to argue in a clearly articulated thesis sentence. Each paragraph following from there should build upon your thesis, providing evidence and argument to support your claims without introducing extraneous information that serves to confuse rather than edify. **Failure to proofread and spell-check your papers will result in a grade no higher than a D.**

This assignment requires you to construct an analytically rigorous essay. By “analytically rigorous” I mean to steer you far away from a “report” on what the thinkers had to say. Rather, you should present a paper that represents a thorough understanding both of what they say and why it is important - what are the implications for people, and for politics, of what they write? Cull from the texts relevant evidence to support your claims about what the authors say (that is, don’t misrepresent them or “cartoon” their arguments).

While your essay will require some evaluative effort on your part -that is, you will need to stress the strengths and weaknesses of each author’s theory- this evaluation is not to be based on your personal political preferences. So, an assertion such as “I disagree with Thucydides’ argument in *History of the Peloponnesian War* because it offends my sense of morality” would not help your cause. Something more appropriate might read, “I disagree with Thucydides’ assertion that justice is a concept invoked only by the weak and thus should be disregarded as a guide to human action. As the following argument demonstrates, justice is an essential component of political action by any state or individual.”

I expect that you will cite textual evidence where appropriate and provide proper citations for your quotes and paraphrases. (Any standardized citation format is acceptable. If you do not have a preferred citation method, two good ones to become familiar with are the MLA’s *Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and the *Chicago Manual of Style*’s citation code.)

Please feel free to come talk to me if you have questions or wish to discuss your ideas. I will not look at or comment on drafts over email but I am happy to meet with you during office hours or alternate times.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ESSAY TOPICS:

1. Political Authority

Although Socrates' *Apology* and *Crito*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and Plato's *Republic* all address the problem of political authority, they do so from widely divergent perspectives. Drawing upon and comparing the ideas expressed in the *Republic* and 1 of the other above-mentioned texts, consider the following questions: How is political authority justified? What is its proper source? Under what circumstances and in the name of what values may political authority be disobeyed, checked, subverted, or overthrown? Which of the justifications of political authority do you find most compelling? On what grounds?

Obviously this topic requires you to look closely at the arguments concerning political authority in the *Republic* and the other texts. Do not, however, fall into the trap of presenting a comparison among these thinkers. Rather, using these texts as foundations and/or foils, develop your own argument about political authority. Although you may choose to agree or disagree with any or all of these authors and/or any or all of their ideas, I expect your essay to offer a coherent and consistent argument about the justification, source, and limits of political authority.

Textual evidence, logical reasoning, and rebuttal of counter-arguments and alternative approaches must support your argument and your conclusions.

2. Virtue and Justice in the Republic

Although many of Plato's proposals run contrary to modern conceptions of individual rights popular today, is he incorrect to argue that the *Republic* is more likely to be a just and virtuous city than cities of today? How would you define justice? Do you agree that justice is the primary virtue of a city and a person? If not, what virtue would you propose instead? How would your city arrive at that virtue, or, if you share Plato's commitment to justice but dislike his methods, how would you arrive at justice?

Obviously this topic requires you to look closely at the *Republic* and to engage Plato's emphasis on justice, his definition of justice, as well as his methods for achieving it. Although you may choose to agree or disagree with any or all of these aspects, I expect your essay to offer a coherent and consistent argument about the primary virtue a city should seek and the methods for achieving that virtue.

Textual evidence, logical reasoning, and rebuttal of counter-arguments and alternative approaches must support your argument and your conclusions.