

**HONORS SEMINAR 5703**  
**MACHIAVELLI AND HIS READERS:**  
**FROM RENAISSANCE FLORENCE TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF IRAQ**

Fall 2005 / Dr. Paul Wright

1:00-2:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Honors Seminar Room (SAC)

**I. General information**

My Office: SAC 271

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-3:30, or by appointment.

Email: paul.wright@villanova.edu

Office Phone: 610-519-6943 (note that email is generally a better way to contact me than voicemail)

**II. Course Description and Outline**

The course examines key political and cultural crises from the Renaissance to the present day through the prism of Machiavellianism. The legacy of Machiavelli's writings leaves us with many unanswered questions: Just how and why did Machiavelli scandalize Europe's assumptions about theology, ethics, and political order? What role did technology and the rise of print culture play in the process? How did competing readings of Machiavelli inflect understandings of the conflicts that plagued Europe in the 200 years following his death? How do these readings of Machiavelli influence or alter our understanding of conflicts taking place right now?

Our course will be approached in three important phases, each lasting approximately 4 weeks (with our first week devoted to establishing the goals of the course, and the final week reserved for oral presentations):

- We commence by reading Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses* in the historical context of debates about civic humanism and republicanism in Renaissance Florence; we then turn to Machiavelli's infamous sex comedy, *Mandragola*. After examining the ways in which Machiavelli's contemporaries reacted to his insights, we will look to the equally important printing history of Machiavelli's texts, both authorized and surreptitious.
- In this light, the history of the European book trade lends itself naturally to a broader exploration of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, with some attention to the Index of books banned by the Catholic Church—to which Machiavelli's texts were eventually consigned. We will see how Protestant England also viewed Machiavelli as a threat, both conceptually and in terms of a broader anxiety about the importation of Italian and Catholic culture. We will read briefly from key English inheritors of the Machiavellian tradition, including Shakespeare, Jonson, Bacon, and Hobbes. Through these interpreters, we see how Machiavelli formed one of the intellectual cornerstones of the shaky foundation upon which seventeenth-century England built its accommodation between King and Parliament. In this sense, the English Civil War can be read as a decidedly Machiavellian contest.

- Finally, we conclude our course by looking at how Machiavelli has made his way into our own times. Among things we will explore are paradoxes such as these. How could an early twentieth-century Marxist like Antonio Gramsci find such inspiration in Machiavelli, while business manuals and leadership guides from our own time make use of Machiavelli to tell a particularly pro-capitalist story about our economy? How does Machiavelli, clearly no scientist even in Galileo’s sense, continue to survive in the imagination of biologists and social scientists, especially in the context of genetic engineering and theories of “social Darwinism”? And lastly, how has Machiavelli been used to support American involvement in Iraq and the “War on Terror,” when his books are so often condemned for their supposed approval of political terror and their advice that it is “better to be feared than loved”?

### **III. Required Texts**

Note: While we do have texts to be purchased at the university bookstore, some of our readings this semester will be electronic reserves. These readings can be found by going to the “My Classroom” webpage for our course and following the link called “E-learning tools,” which will in turn take you to “Electronic Reserves.” Please look there for any readings marked with an asterisk such as this—\*. *Be sure to print out the appropriate .pdf file, read it before class, and bring it with you to class—This is standard procedure for all electronic reserves this term.* Note there will also be a collection of optional texts on reserve that might prove useful in your writing this term. This list can be found at the end of this syllabus.

Here are the required texts available for purchase at the university bookstore. Please acquire the edition listed here (make sure the ISBN matches, particularly if you choose to order texts online, etc.).

1. Machiavelli, *The Prince* (trans. Adams) (Norton, ISBN 0393962202)
2. Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (trans. Mansfield) (U. of Chicago, ISBN 0226500365)
3. Machiavelli, *Mandragola* (trans. Flaumenhaft) (Waveland Press, ISBN 0917974573)
4. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (Penguin, ISBN 0140714731)
5. Jonson, *Sejanus in The Devil Is An Ass & Other Plays* (Oxford, ISBN 0198132298)
6. Forgacs (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-35* (NYU, ISBN 0814727018)
7. Bing, *What Would Machiavelli Do? The Ends Justify the Meanness* (Harper Business, ISBN 0066620104)
8. Lord, *The Modern Prince: What Leaders Need to Know Now* (Yale, ISBN 0300105959)

#### **IV. Schedule**

Please note: this schedule may be modified over the course of the semester as needed.

8/25 Introduction: Machiavelli's Letters, pp. 123-31 in *The Prince*, esp. 10 Dec. 1513 & 17 May 1521

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8/30 Machiavelli, *Prince*, pp. 1-33

9/1 *Prince*, pp. 33-60

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9/6 *Prince*, pp. 60-72

9/8 *Discourses on Livy*, pp. 1-14 (shortened class, St. Thomas Day)

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9/13 *Discourses on Livy*, pp. 15-122

9/15 *Discourses on Livy*, pp. 123-207

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**Mon. 9/19:** Zhang Yimou's *Hero* screened in Falvey Viewing Room 3, 6PM

9/20 *Discourses on Livy*, pp. 209-310

9/22 \*Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence*

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9/27 Machiavelli, *Mandragola*, Acts 1-3

9/29 *Mandragola*, Acts 4-5

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10/4 Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Acts 1-3

10/6 *Coriolanus*, Acts 4-5

**SHORT ESSAY DUE ON 10/7**

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#### **MID-TERM BREAK**

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10/18 Jonson, *Sejanus*, Acts 1-3

10/20 *Sejanus*, Acts 4-5

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10/25 \*Bacon, *Essays*: "Of Truth"; "Of Revenge"; "Of Simulation & Dissimulation"; "Of Great Place"; "Of Ambition"; "Of Negotiating"; "Of Vicissitude of Things"; and from *Novum Organum*: "Idols of the Mind"

**Tues. 10/25:** Errol Morris's *Fog of War* screened in Falvey Viewing Room 3, 6PM

10/27 \*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction; Chs. 2, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 29

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11/1 *Antonio Gramsci Reader*, pp. 31-32; 36-39; 45-52; 67-68; 112-13; 147-51; 189-90; 422-4; 428-9; 199; 217-21; 222-45

11/3 *Gramsci Reader*, pp. 275-6; 286-9; 289-94; 294-6; 298-9; 300-11; 320-22; 323-43; 347-9; 349-50; 393-4; 395

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11/8 Sociobiology: \*Whiten and Byrne, *Machiavellian Intelligence* (excerpts)

\* Brozinsky and Gibson, *Eat or Be Eaten* (excerpts)

11/10 Machiavelli and Women: \* Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman* (excerpts)

\* Rubin, *The Princessa: Machiavelli for Women* (excerpts)

\*Casanova, *The Machiavellian's Guide to Womanizing* (excerpts)

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- 11/15 Machiavelli and the Market: \* Bull, "Machiavelli's Contemporaries"  
\*McAlpine, "Renaissance Realpolitik for Modern Management"  
\*Stone & Pashley, "From the Dark to the Light: Ranges of the Real Skills of Management"  
11/17 Bing, *What Would Machiavelli Do?*
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- 11/22 Machiavelli and the Neo-Cons: \*Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (excerpts)  
\* Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership* (excerpts)  
\*Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (excerpts)

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

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- 11/29 Lord, *The Modern Prince*, pp. xi-133 (Preface & Chs. 1-14)  
**Wed. 11/30:** Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* screened in Falvey Viewing Room 3, 6PM  
12/1 *The Modern Prince*, pp. 134-231 (Chs. 15-26)
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- 12/6 \*Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli"  
12/8 Oral Presentations & Submission of Précis for Final Project
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**SYMPOSIUM (DATE & TIME TBA):** \*Vollmann, "Where Do My Rights End?" from *Rising Up & Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom, & Urgent Means*

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE: Saturday, December 17 at 9AM in the box provided outside my office (an electronic copy is also required)**

**Note that you are required to attend at least one of the three film screenings over the course of the semester.**

**V. Breakdown of Grading Policy**

Course requirements—*committed* attendance and participation in seminar discussion; a short essay early in the term; an oral presentation; and a research paper built on the foundation of the oral presentation.

**Attendance & Participation (30%)**

**Short Essay (25%)**

**Oral Presentation (15%)**

**Final Research Project (30%)**

**VI. Course Objectives**

This course takes as its key objectives the following:

- Understanding Niccolò Machiavelli in the rich context of Renaissance Italy and with a deeper appreciation of the complexity of his thought than is normally afforded by survey courses or upper-level seminars within one discipline.
- Developing students' facility with honoring texts in their own moment, but with a complementary attentiveness to their appropriation or rejection in other cultural and historical contexts.

- Re-thinking how and why disciplines reveal, shape, or radically transform narratives, authors, facts, and ideas—giving due consideration to disciplines themselves as products of historical forces and the choices made by their practitioners, including ourselves as interpreters of the past and its legacy.
- The continued development of students’ capacity for critical and analytical thought—this will be fostered and demonstrated by students in taking active responsibility for seminar discussions, effective oral presentations, and the writing of academic essays which are scholarly yet also intellectually ambitious. In this vein, academic writing will be treated as a framework and an opportunity for inter-disciplinary innovation rather than as a straitjacket for “acceptable” thought.
- The accomplishment of each of the preceding goals via the concerted effort possible only in a collaborative classroom, where the development and understanding of ideas trump the pursuit of grades and “results.”

## **VII. Explanation of Formal Requirements**

It should come as no surprise that your writing will be a very significant component of the course, especially as a means of coming to grips with our topic. There will be a short 5-page essay early in the term whose purpose will be to make sense of Machiavelli on his own terms; this essay will be assigned just prior to our move towards Machiavelli’s reception in the centuries since his death. The defining assignment of the term, however, will be the 10-15 page research project that will close out our course. This project will examine in scholarly depth some aspect of Machiavelli’s reception, perhaps tackling something discussed in seminar, but just as easily the paper could explore some completely different dimension of Machiavelli’s influence (perhaps his legacy in a genre, discipline, culture, or historical period we did not discuss in class). Students will construct their research projects in consultation with me, and they will be expected to work closely with me in drafting that project over the last half of the semester.

Additionally, students will be expected in the final week of class to deliver to the seminar an oral presentation on their research projects. The benefits of this exercise will be twofold: 1) to have students share their work with their colleagues who would otherwise be unlikely to appreciate it if the project were simply “turned in” at the end of the semester; and 2) to receive critical feedback and advice not only from me, but also from their peers. These goals are in essence consistent with my larger expectations for discussion in the class, where I anticipate that students will take responsibility for creating a dynamic seminar whose purpose is to refine our collective thinking on a difficult topic.

## **VIII. Plagiarism, Cheating, and Miscellaneous Nastiness**

- **An academic integrity violation will result in failure for the course, without exception.**
- There is a profound difference between learning and copying from others, whether they are your classmates, internet entrepreneurs, or long-dead scholars. Learning involves hard work, even when following in others’ footsteps. It includes giving credit where credit is due, and it goes a long way towards my earlier advice about acknowledging limitations. By acknowledging the sources of our ideas, we both put them in their proper context and intellectually raise the bar for ourselves. Cutting and

pasting from the net, lifting from books, forging, having others take tests, etc.—these are all unnecessary, self-defeating, and subject to severe measures from me and any other self-respecting instructor. Lastly, you only do yourself a disservice when you disregard the conventions by which we recognize the hard work of others—cheating only shows that you do not belong in a community wherein we appreciate rather than exploit one another.

- Believe it or not, ethics is at heart pragmatic. You can accomplish much more through integrity, propriety, and the admission of intellectual indebtedness than you can cutting corners and kidnapping the expressions and ideas of others. In fact, I insist that cheating wastes more time than doing the work oneself.
- Having said all this, I understand that in many cases, especially with plagiarism, things get rather ambiguous. Many students stumble into plagiarism rather than will it; we can discuss how to avoid these more innocent (but no less harmful) errors. And of course, when in doubt, talk to me. I will gladly help out.

### **IX. Additional Resources and Advice**

In order for all of us to get the most possible out of our time together, the following resources will prove indispensable:

- The *Villanova Writing Center*, located in Dalton Room, Old Falvey 202 (Ph. 519-4604). Writing consultations are available by appointment or on a walk-in basis, but it is best to make appointments, particularly at peak times. Make an appointment now in anticipation of your term paper; if you wait too long, it's very possible that no appointments will be available come late November. Don't hesitate to go—no one's writing is too polished to benefit from a consultation, nor is anyone's writing too irredeemable. Naturally, you will also be consulting closely with me in the process of writing the paper.
- It is the policy of Villanova to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and wish to request accommodations to complete your course requirements, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss the request. If you would like further information or are uncertain whether you are eligible for such accommodations, contact the *Office of Learning Support Services* at 519-5636, or visit the office in Geraghty Hall. Note that disabilities can include learning impediments as well as physical limitations.
- Take advantage of my office hours. In terms of the readings and understanding our subject, it is invariably the case that an office visit clarifies misunderstandings that would otherwise go uncorrected. Let me know right away if anything is impeding you in dealing with the demands or reaping the rewards of the course. I will keep an open mind if you will likewise keep me up-to-date on matters of importance to you, stressful or otherwise. I am thrilled to hear your good news as well as any problems or complaints.
- Take note of your classmates at all levels of experience. You will likely learn as much from one another ultimately as from me. Don't let unhealthy forms of competitiveness or preconceptions about one another muddy the waters—consider and treat one another with the respect and toleration merited by colleagues.

**X. Reserve Materials** (Texts marked with an \* are especially recommended, and those marked † are available from me rather than the library's reserve room.)

Machiavelli's Works and Correspondence; Biographies

\*Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others* (ed. Gilbert)

\*†Atkinson & Sices (eds.), *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*

\*†Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*

De Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*

Viroli, *Niccolò's Smile*

Studies of Machiavelli & His Influence; Works by Key Inheritors

Ascoli et al. (eds.), *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*

Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*

Bacon, *Essays*

\*Berlin, *Against the Current*

\*Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries*

\*†Bock et al. (eds.), *Machiavelli and Republicanism*

†Brozinsky and Gibson, *Eat or Be Eaten*

†Casanova, *The Machiavellian's Guide to Womanizing*

Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*

\*Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries*

†Curry and Zarate, *Machiavelli for Beginners*

Donaldson, *Machiavelli and the Mystery of State*

\*Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*

\*†Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation between Gramsci & Machiavelli*

†Frederick of Prussia, *Anti-Machiavel*

\*Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*

\*Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics*

\*Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*

Guicciardini, *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*

\*Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*

Guicciardini, *History of Italy*

†Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics*

Harris et al. (eds.), *Machiavelli, Marketing, and Management*

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

\*Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli*

†Jay, *Management and Machiavelli*

\*Jed, *Chaste Thinking*

\*Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*

Kaplan, *Warrior Politics*

Ledeon, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership*

Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*

\*Martines, *April Blood*

†Masters, *Fortune is a River*

\*Meinecke, *Machiavellism*  
Milton, *Paradise Lost*  
Montaigne, *Essays*  
\*†Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters*  
\*Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Machiavelli*  
\*Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*  
\*Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*  
†Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men*  
†Rubin, *The Princessa: Machiavelli for Women*  
\*Schmitt and Skinner (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*  
†Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*  
\*Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*  
Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*  
\*Todorov, *Imperfect Garden*  
\*Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*  
†Whiten and Byrne, *Machiavellian Intelligence*