

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Civic Excellent & Justice for the Common Good

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

Reading

Aristotle. (2017). *Politics: A New Translation* (C. D. C. Reeve, Trans.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. (Original work from c.350 BCE).
(Excerpts are from chapters 1, 4–7, 9, 12–13 in book III.)

Questions

1. According to Aristotle, what is a citizen? What are the excellences of a citizen and how are they related to the moral excellences (virtues) of a person? Why does Aristotle believe that this supports his claim that craftsmen are not (and should not be) true citizens?
2. What makes a “correct” form of government? What makes a “deviant” form? What six forms of government does Aristotle classify? Is one of these constitutions better than all the rest according to Aristotle?
3. What is justice according to Aristotle? What is the just way to distribute offices and honors (and any other benefits of society)? How does Aristotle's example of the flute players (1282^b30–1283^a2, pp. 69–70) illustrate this?
4. What problem does the existence of one person of “extreme virtue” (1284^a5, p. 72) create for constitutions? How does Aristotle propose for dealing with that problem?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.