

University of Colorado, Boulder
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Prudence and Politics
Directly after class; and by
appointment

I. Purpose of the Course.

Our purpose is to examine the interplay between power and principle in statecraft through the prism of the cardinal virtue of prudence. It begins with an inquiry into different conceptions of prudence before settling on a definition that will provide the framework for this course; i.e. right reason about the right things to be done. The major part of the course will consist of case studies, which will address the following questions bearing on prudence. 1. How did our case study define the major challenges of his time? 2. How did our case study conceive the realm of the desirable and the possible, in general and in particular? 3. What domestic and international circumstances facilitated or constrained the way in which our case study pursued his goals? 4. To what extent and to what effect did a religious world view inform the way in which our case study defined and pursued his objectives? 5. What are the contending historical interpretations regarding the magnitude and desirability of our case study's accomplishments? 6. How does our case study compare to his main challengers of the day, or to other leaders in difference historical periods. 7. When and in what circumstances does religious faith contribute to or undermine prudence? Can one, for example, validly compare Lincoln with Moses?

By rigorously analyzing the meaning of prudence in theory and practice, the course strives to instill a worthy standard of measure for evaluating statesmanship and a disposition to emulate the best rather than the worst examples of it.

II. Requirements.

Each student will complete two assignments on time, plus make oral presentations from time to time.

The midterm analytical assignment requires you to compare the careers of George Washington, and the presidency of Abraham Lincoln--- based on the standard of prudence defined as right reason about right things to be done --- with the Presidency of Woodrow Wilson, and with the records of, Joseph, Moses, and David as leaders. You will analyze these leaders based on the seven questions listed in section I defining the purposes of the course.

The final assignment is due the day of your scheduled final exam, no exceptions: For the final, you are to analyze the career, accomplishments, and debates about five of the following: Obama, Reagan, Nixon, Churchill, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Yoshida, MacArthur, Martin Luther King, Thatcher, and, and Pope John Paul II, based on the seven questions listed in Section I above.

III. Books

H.W. Brand. Woodrow Wilson.
Richard Brookheiser, Founding Father.
Elizabeth Drew, *Nixon*.
Derek Chollet. *The Long Game*.
Marshall Frady. *Martin Luther King*.
Paul Johnson, *Churchill*.
.Robert G. Kaufman. *Dangerous Doctrine*
Thomas Krannawitter. *Vindicating Lincoln*.
John O'Sullivan. *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*.
Richard Nixon. *Leaders*.

IV.. Class Schedule.

A. On Prudence and Statecraft.

Readings: St. Thomas Aquinas, "On Prudence," (online); Machiavelli, (handout).

B. Joseph, Moses, and David as Political Leaders.

Readings: Genesis, Chapters 37-50; Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (read narrative; skip laws and rituals); 1 and 2 Samuel. (online).

C. George Washington.

Readings: Brookheiser, Founding Father.

D. Lincoln --- savior of or menace to the Union?

Readings: Krannawitter, Vindicating Lincoln.

E. Woodrow Wilson --- triumph or tragedy?

Readings: Brand, Wilson.

F. Winston Churchill: Great but not Prudent?

Readings: Johnson Churchill.

G. Religion and Prudence ---

Frady, Martin Luther King; O'Sullivan, The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister, Chapters on John Paul, II.

H. Richard Nixon:

Readings: Drew, Nixon.

. Ronald Reagan --- Sleepwalking through History? Or Chipper for the Gipper?

Readings: O'Sullivan, The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister, chapters on Reagan.

K. Prudence and the mark of a good political general.

1. De Gaulle, Adenauer, MacArthur, Yoshida, and Thatcher ---- delusions of grandeur?

Readings: Chapters on all but Thatcher in Nixon, Leaders; Chapter on Thatcher in O'Sullivan, The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister.

3. Obama's Foreign Policy: Audacity of Hope or hopeless audacity?

Readings: Chollet, The Long Game; Kaufman, Dangerous Doctrine.