

17.03. Introduction to Political Thought

Lecture Outline: Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Bk I, chs. 6-12, 16-18, 55, 58;
Bk II, Intro and chs. 1-2; Bk III, chs. 1, 40-41

I. Religion

- A. Religion of the Romans essential to its success
- B. Machiavelli's critique of the Church
- C. Civil religion: religious means for secular ends

II. The people

- A. "Humors"/motives of human beings
- B. People v. nobles
- C. How a prince can win over the people
- D. People v. prince (Bk I, ch. 58)

III. Relationship between customs and laws

- A. If a city is corrupt, good laws are not enough to save it
 - 1. Need for new institutions but necessary reforms nearly impossible in corrupt cities
 - 2. Only remedy is a prince who uses "extraordinary measures"
- B. City characterized by equality suited for republics

IV. The case for republics

- A. Devotion to the common good ~ republican government ~ glory
- B. People better safeguard liberty than the prince
- C. People together make better judgments than the prince
- D. Role of conflict in preserving liberty (people v. nobles)
- E. Collective autonomy
- F. The expansionist Roman republic as the model
 - 1. How acquired—through *virtù* or *Fortuna*?
 - 2. Greatness but eventually corruption and decay
 - 3. Need for innovation, need for another founder
- G. Why case for republics presented as commentary of Livy's history of Rome

V. Relationship between *The Prince* and *Discourses*