



Texts and Ideas: Power, Political Leadership and the Renaissance

Course Number
CORE 9400 F01

Brightspace course site <https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home/428589>

Spring 2025

Please contact florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on: 20-01-2025

Lecturer Contact Information

Matteo GIGLIOLI

matteo.giglioli@nyu.edu

OH: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:00pm to 2:00pm (by appointment), Villa Ulivi, office 5

Prerequisites

None

Units earned

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Course Details

- Class meeting day/time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00pm to 4:15pm
- All times are Central European Time (CET). Please note that in Europe, Daylight Saving Time (DST) starts on Sunday, March 30, 2025 and clocks will be set forward one hour. In the United States, Daylight Saving Time starts on Sunday, March 9, 2025.
- Location: Villa La Pietra, aula Le Vedute.

Course Description

Politics is about power and leadership, but over whom? Historically, political communities have been united by language, religion, and culture in complex ways and with long-term consequences. The course aims to explore these relationships. It is an overview of topics in intellectual history, presented through a close reading of major texts in the Western canon. The study of philosophical and literary sources is complemented by reference to masterpieces in the visual arts, with a view to explore the importance of imagery in personifying ideas and communities.

The course is intended to introduce students to the ideals of liberal education. Students become acquainted with some of the works that have been most influential in shaping the modern world and with significant instances in which the ideas in these works have been



debated, developed, appropriated, or rejected. Texts and Ideas is an examination of how texts influence each other, create traditions, and reflect societal ideals.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to different methodologies and forms of textual analysis
- Acquaint students with certain seminal texts, following the arc of intellectual traditions
- Explore how literary genre and cultural context affect the transmission of ideas
- Encourage critical reflection on the role of humanistic study for ethical/civic growth
- Recognize the areas of conflict and exclusion embedded in the Western canon, as well as the resources present within it to overcome them.

Examples of some questions we will ask in this course are:

- Who is part of the political community?
- What is the relationship between political belonging and war?
- How has the notion of political identity changed over time?
- Are strong ties necessary for a thriving society?
- How important is historical tradition for political life?
- What makes the government of a political community legitimate?
- How are images connected to collective identities and group stereotypes?

Assessment Components

Assessment will be based on in-class participation and three pieces of individual work; their relative contribution to the overall class grade is as follows:

- Participation: 15%
- Take-home paper: 30%
- Midterm: 30%
- Final paper: 25%

– The take-home paper is a 10-page essay, with which students are intended to showcase the interpretive and textual techniques acquired during the course. The assignment will be scaffolded throughout the semester, with two shorter preliminary versions due at the end of weeks 5 (24 February) and 8 (17 March). These first two drafts will be annotated by the instructor but will only receive check/check plus/check minus grades, for informational purposes. The entirety of the grade for the assignment will depend on the final version of the paper, due online on the Brightspace site on **April 19th at 5:00pm**.

– The midterm is a 70-minute, closed-book exam with multiple short essay questions related to material in the first part of the course; it will be held in session 13, i.e. on **March 4th**.

– The final paper is a 10-page essay covering the reading and in-class discussion material from the course. No further reading or bibliographical research is required. The topic will be circulated on April 21st and the assignment will be due online on the Brightspace site two weeks later, on **Tuesday May 6th at 5:00pm**.

You are expected to attend class in person. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

Midterm and Final Exams

- Midterm: 4 March 2025, timed exam in class (70 minutes)
- Final: 21 April – 6 May 2025, take-home paper

Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in



discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. Since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. Site visits and field trips are considered regular class meetings and the attendance policies outlined here apply equally to these as well.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to recoup the work that was missed by getting notes from a classmate and consulting with your faculty member. Remember: Not all class activities can be made up and frequent absences may affect the participation, commitment or engagement component of the final grade.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction on the participation, commitment or engagement component of the final grade for every week's worth of classes missed and may negatively affect your final grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to an F (Fail) in that course. Late arrivals are not permitted. Your faculty member will keep track of repeated absences, and points may be deducted from the participation component of final grade.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must immediately inform your professor and the Office of Academic Support. Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies. Please note, emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff.

Exams, tests, quizzes, oral presentations, field trips and other important deadlines that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation to be submitted to the Office of Academic Support. For regular class sessions, health-related absences require a doctor's note to be submitted only if you miss four consecutive days due to illness. To have these absences excused, please send the doctor's note via email to the Office of Academic Support at florence.advising@nyu.edu. **Please note that absences cannot be excused retroactively.**

Important deadlines (i.e. exams, quizzes, field trips) that are missed for any other reason may or may not be made up at the discretion of the instructor in consultation with the Office of Academic Support and the Office of Global Programs.

****If there is a pattern of single day non consecutive absences for health reasons over the course of the semester, you may be contacted by the Academics team.****

Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email to florence.advising@nyu.edu one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. **Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.** See also [Religious Accommodations at NYU](#). If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu

**Final exams**

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

The complete Global Attendance Policy is posted in the Academic Policies tab in Brightspace and on the [NYU Florence Student Portal](#) website. After you have read and reviewed the policies, if there is anything that still needs further clarification or raises a question, please reach out to florence.advising@nyu.edu.

Late Submission of Work

Please refer to Academic Policies in Brightspace. For any questions, contact florence.advising@nyu.edu.

Incompletes

Please refer to Academic Policies in Brightspace. For any questions, contact florence.advising@nyu.edu.

Teaching & Learning Philosophy

Students learn in a variety of ways: some intelligences are more visual, others text-based; some prefer individual reflection, others open debate; some shine in research, others in careful study of evidence provided; some enjoy the systematic nature of learning, others thrive by questioning. In an introductory course, it is optimal, both for the purpose of transmission of knowledge and for assessment, to offer a broad scope of different activities that will allow most to experience some pedagogical mode familiar to them, while challenging all to broaden their analytic and communication skills.

Required Text(s)

The texts covered by the course come in a wide variety of editions and translations. While students may consult different editions of their choosing, it is recommended that they familiarize themselves with the editions that will be quoted from in the lectures and that are made available through the NYU library system; they are as follows:

- Coogan, M.D., Brettler, M.Z., Newsom, C.A., Perkins, P. (Eds.), 2010. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Sophocles, 2013. *Antigone*. Mulroy edition, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Aristophanes, 1998. *Ecclesiazusae*. Sommerstein translation, Liverpool University Press, Oxford.
- Plato, 1920. *Dialogues*. Jowett translation, Random House, New York.
- Sallust, 2008. *The War Against Jugurtha*. Balmaceda & Comber edition, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
- Tacitus, 1999. *Agricola, Germania*. Birley translation, Oxford University Press, Oxford.



- Augustine, 1957-72. *The City of God*. Green *et al.* translation, Cambridge, Harvard University Press/Loeb Library.
- Aquinas, T., 1982. *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*. Phelan translation, Pontifical Inst. of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, ON.
- De Pizan, C., 2018. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Bourgault edition, Hackett, Indianapolis.
- More, T., 2016. *Utopia*. Adams translation, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Machiavelli, N., 1998. *The Prince*. Mansfield translation, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Guicciardini, F., 1990. *Maxims and Reflections*. Domandi translation, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Rabelais, F., 1991. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Frame edition, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- De la Boétie, E., 2012. *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*. Smith edition, Hackett, Indianapolis.

All readings are available online on the NYU Brightspace course site. Hard copies of some textbooks are available for consultation and semester-long loans in the [Villa Ulivi Library](#). Please email florence.library@nyu.edu to reserve a copy. To request scans from books on reserve please fill out the [Ulivi Library Book Scan Form](#).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

Students may find the following general and reference texts helpful for background knowledge. They are available through the NYU library system.

- The Oxford Classical Dictionary.
- A. Classen (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, De Gruyter.
- J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.



Course calendar

Session/date	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Session 1 21 January 2025	Course introduction.	/	
Session 2 23 January 2025	The Old Testament.	<i>The Book of Judith.</i>	
Session 3 28 January 2025	Greek theatre.	Sophocles, <i>Antigone.</i>	
Session 4 30 January 2025	Greek theatre.	Aristophanes, <i>Ecclesiazusae.</i>	
Session 5 4 February 2025	Plato.	<i>Symposium.</i>	
Session 6 6 February 2025	Plato.	<i>Apology.</i>	
Session 7 11 February 2025	Sallust	<i>Crito.</i>	
Session 8 13 February 2025	Sallust	<i>Republic, Book I.</i>	
Session 9 18 February 2025	Tacitus.	<i>The War against Jugurtha.</i>	
Session 10 20 February 2025	Tacitus.	<i>Agricola.</i>	
24 February 2025			Scaffolded paper, 1 st version due (~3pp.)
Session 11 25 February 2025	Augustine.	<i>The City of God</i> (Book I: Preface, 1-15, 29-36;	
Session 12 27 February 2025	Augustine.	Book XII: 1-9; Book XIV: 1-4, 11-18, 21-28; Book XV: 1-2, 4-5; Book XIX: 4, 11, 17, 20, 28; Book XXII: 30).	
Session 13 4 March 2025	Midterm.	/	In-class closed-book midterm (70 mins.)
Session 14 6 March 2025	Site visit: Santa Maria Novella.		
Session 15 11 March 2025	Aquinas.	<i>On Kingship.</i>	
Session 16 13 March 2025	Aquinas.		
17 March 2025			Scaffolded paper, 2 nd version due (~6pp.)
Session 17 18 March 2025	De Pizan.	<i>The Book of the City of Ladies, Books I & III.</i>	
Session 18 20 March 2025	De Pizan.		
24-30 March 2025	Spring Break; No classes		
Session 19 1 April 2025	More.	<i>Utopia.</i>	
Session 20 3 April 2025	More.		



Session/date	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Session 21 Friday 4 April 2025 *** Makeup date ***	Site visit: Orsanmichele.	/	
Session 22 8 April 2025	Machiavelli.	<i>The Prince.</i>	
Session 23 10 April 2025	Machiavelli.		
Session 24 15 April 2025	Guicciardini.	<i>Maxims and Reflections.</i>	
Session 25 17 April 2025	Guicciardini.		
19 April 2025			Definitive version of scaffolded paper due
21 April 2025			Final take-home paper topic circulated
Session 26 22 April 2025	Rabelais.	<i>Gargantua & Pantagruel, Book II</i>	
Session 27 24 April 2025	Rabelais.		
Session 28 29 April 2025	De la Boétie. Course conclusion.	<i>Discourse on Voluntary Servitude.</i>	
6 May 2025			Final take-home paper due

Co-Curricular Activities

Sessions 14 and 21 will consist of site visits to the complex of Santa Maria Novella and to Orsanmichele, two key locations for religious and secular public life in Medieval and Renaissance Florence. Students are also required to attend the lecture on “The Ends of Europe”, Tuesday 11 March, 6pm in Villa Sassetti (more information will be provided in class).

Your Lecturer

Matteo Giglioli (Ph.D. Princeton 2010) is a political theorist specializing in modern European political thought. Before NYU, he has taught and conducted research at UC Berkeley, Columbia, Sciences Po Paris, Johns Hopkins SAIS, and the Università degli Studi di Bologna. Among his publications is the first English-language translation of the political works of Ernest Renan. He has been at NYU Florence since the Fall semester of 2023.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

As the University's policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may



check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offenses against academic integrity.

The presentation of any improperly cited work other than your own, as though it is your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes a breach of academic integrity. It is important that all work submitted for this course is your own. It is also an offense to submit your own work for assignments from two different courses that are substantially the same (be they oral presentations or written work). If there is overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you must inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides - Plagiarism and How to Avoid It](#)

AI Policy

The purpose of a Texts and Ideas course is to engage deeply with writings in the canon in the traditional, analog fashion. Conceivably, students (especially non-native-language speakers of English) might draw some benefit from use of LLMs/writing assistants to refine the prose of their papers. When it comes to brainstorming ideas, producing summaries of texts one has not read, or answering essay questions from scratch, however, extreme caution should be employed, as use of AI tools (apart from running counter to the pedagogical purpose of the course) is highly susceptible to producing dramatic errors. This being said, the official policy of the course is to allow use of AI tools for take-home assignments as students see fit; naturally, individual students remain fully and personally responsible for the content of all the coursework they submit.

Wellness and Counseling Resources

Mental health resources are available to students studying at NYU Florence through NYU's Wellness Exchange. Students can speak to a counselor about a variety of topics, including, day-to-day challenges, stress, health concerns and medical issues. Students may call the Wellness Exchange and talk to a Counselor 24/7 at 800879563 (free from Italian phone numbers) or +1 212 443 9999. You can also download the [Wellness Exchange app](#) and chat live with a Counselor 24/7. In case of emergency, students can call the Office of Student Life Florence duty phone 24/7 at +39 055 5007450. Alternatively, students can also make an appointment with NYU Florence's onsite Global Wellness Counselors. If you would like to arrange an appointment with Dr. Thiago Fernandes or Dr. Silvia Fiammenghi, please send an email to florence.counseling@nyu.edu with your weekly schedule attached.

Inclusivity Policies and Priorities

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of



pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Florence.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
- Phone: 212-998-2277
- Local Telephone: 055 5007277



Community Engagement at NYU Florence

NYU Florence offers students the opportunity to engage with the Florentine community through off campus volunteer activities and placements which vary based on the student's availability, academic interests and language skill level.

There are two levels of participation:

- Short-term, single day, community-wide events
- Sustained weekly interaction with a local school, or nonprofit association

Some students choose to do both! The experience is well worth it!

To learn more about Community Engagement at NYU Florence, please email the Community Engagement office at florence.ce@nyu.edu

IDEA Cafè - NYU Florence

IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) Cafè is a space where community members can bring up ideas, create synergies, express community concerns, and share information about what is happening in Florence and Italy around topics of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility. Meetings take place approximately every two weeks and are a space in which community members can share their perspectives around these topics. For more information please contact florence.studentlife@nyu.edu