The commonwealth is the concern of a people, but a people is not any group of men assembled in any way, but an assemblage of some size associated with one another through agreement on law and community of interest. The first cause of its assembly is not so much weakness as a kind of natural herding together of men: this species is not isolated or prone to wandering alone, but it is so created that not even in an abundance of everything do men wish to live a solitary existence.

Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, c. 54 B.C.

We may define a republic to be, or at least may bestow that name on, a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of a people; and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is essential to such a government, that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favoured class of it.

James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 39, 1787-88

I. COURSE GOALS, STRUCTURE, AND THEMES:

The principal goal of this course is to examine the principles of classical political philosophy which were an influence on the political thought of the Founders. These influences were twofold: first, there is a direct line of development from antiquity to the eighteenth century regarding the best form of political organization; second, the belief of classical thinkers that the practice of the virtues was a necessary prerequisite for good political leadership figured prominently in the political views of the Founders. Taken together, these two considerations were highly important for the manner in which the Founders conceived both the role of government and the character of those who engaged in politics.

While other influences – the Protestant tradition, 18th-century rationalism, and English common law, among others – undoubtedly played a role in both the development of the Founders' worldviews and the manner in which these views were applied to the government of the new Republic, an examination of the place of classical political and moral thought will reveal the
substantial importance of antiquity on the American Founding, as well as indicate a continuity with and respect for the past.

There will be a two-part structure to the course: (1) a review of classical political thought; (2) an examination of the writings of the Founders. After a brief survey of ancient politics and the political thought of Plato and Aristotle, the first part of the course will be devoted to a reading of Polybius and Cicero, thinkers who are the bridge between the thought of the fourth-century Greeks and the Founders. The second part of the course will concentrate on the writings of the Founders to examine how they understood and incorporated ancient thought into their own moral and political ideas. Additionally, we will be examining the work of a contemporary scholar, Carl Richard, who has done important research on the connection between antiquity and the Founding.

Among the themes to be explored, perhaps the two most significant are the notion of republicanism and the concept of virtue and the need for virtuous individuals to administer the state. Although both of these themes are capable of being treated separately, nevertheless, they are closely intertwined in classical political thought and in the thought of the Founders. If we define republicanism as a form of government designed to enable individuals to live free from tyranny and fulfill their abilities, then it has been argued that the practice of a certain type of virtue, both by individual citizens and by those who govern, is required to make the system function as well as possible. It appears that the Founders were quite cognizant of this need, and while they designed the Republic's institutions to work reasonably well in the absence of such virtuous administrators, many of their arguments appear to assume that virtuous individuals in the classical sense would be available to govern, thereby ensuring a better form of government than had previously been encountered.

It is to be hoped that this examination will lead to view the Founders as political thinkers and leaders who did not attempt to found a government on radical principles and out of motives of self-interest, but rather as classically educated individuals who were intellectually formed by a tradition of political and moral thought stretching back to antiquity. Finally, by attending to the influence of classical political philosophy on the Founders, a standard may be established from which we may gauge the deviations encountered in contemporary politics and political leaders.

In addition to the goal of acquiring an understanding of some of the key ideas that influenced the political thought of the Founders, the course has the equally important aim of providing the student with the fundamental critical skills that are required for a graduate education in Liberal Studies. These essential skills include, but are not limited to, the ability to analyze complex arguments, offer advanced textual interpretations, present well-reasoned critiques of the views of other authors, develop the ability to present succinctly and coherently one's own position (both orally and in writing), and refine further the student's organizational and written skills.

A core element of the MALS Foundation Courses is to become aware of and practice in the student's own research the sort of interdisciplinary approach that is the hallmark of a Liberal Studies education. A substantial portion of the course will be devoted to examining the assigned texts from an interdisciplinary perspective. Since the history of political philosophy is considered to be part of the wider discipline of the Social Sciences, the skills and techniques acquired in this course will be transferable to other courses that are part of the Social Sciences, as well as to the Humanities.
II. TEXTS

1. Classical texts
Polybius, Selections from *The Histories* (available on Blackboard)

2. Writings from the time of the Founding
Selected readings drawn from the following (available on Blackboard)
Adams, John. *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government*
Selections from the Anti-Federalists
Selections from the correspondence of the Founders

3. Secondary texts

Note on the texts: It is strongly urged that all students purchase the same editions. In the case of Cicero's works, while there are many fine translations of these works, the ones that have been selected most accurately reflect their originals. Additionally, the editions of Cicero and the *Federalist* contain very useful introductory essays and notes to aid in understanding what are quite often difficult arguments. Finally, it is far easier to refer to a particular passage on a particular page if we are all using the same text.

III. EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance: regular attendance is required and expected. If you wish to understand these texts as the foundation for future thinking about how we live as political and moral beings, then attendance in class and close attention to the readings is imperative.

B. Participation: the course will be conducted as a lecture-seminar. Questions, discussions, and disagreements are both welcome and are an excellent way of engaging with the texts.

C. Assignments:
(1) Midterm exam (submitted electronically via email)
There will be a take-home midterm exam which will be in the format of a 7-9 page essay chosen from a list of questions that will address some key issues in classical political thought.

(2) Final paper (submitted electronically via email)
A research paper of 15-18 pages on a topic of your own choosing. While the paper should reflect your particular interests, it should attempt to take into consideration the general subject matter of the course. A brief paper proposal is due on Thursday, July 23, 2014. The final paper is due on Monday, August 17, 2015.
D. Grading:
Your grade for the course will be computed as follows:

- Participation – 10%
- Midterm exam – 30%
- Final paper – 60%

IV. SCHEDULE OF READINGS

**Thursday, May 21**
Introduction to the course
Greek politics and political thought
Reading: Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts*, Chapters 1-4

**Thursday, May 28**
Roman politics and political thought, part 1
Reading: Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts*, Chapters 5-8

**Thursday, June 4**
Roman politics and political thought, part 2
Polybius, selections from *The Histories*
Reading: Polybius, selections from the *Histories*

**Thursday, June 11**
Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, part 1
Reading: Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Books 1-3

**Thursday, June 18**
Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, part 2
Cicero, *On Duties*, part 1
Reading: Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Books 3-6
Cicero, *On Duties*, Book 1

**Thursday, June 25**
Cicero, *On Duties*, part 2
Summary of classical political thought
Reading: Cicero, *On Duties*, Books 2-3
*Midterm exam questions handed out

**Thursday, July 2**
Introduction to the Founding period
The classical influence on the Founding, part 1
Reading: Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, Introduction and Chapters 1-4
*Midterm exams due

**Thursday, July 9**
The classical influence on the Founding, part 2
John Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions of Government*
Reading: Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, Chapters 5-7 and Conclusion
Selections from Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions of Government*
**Thursday, July 16**  
Miscellaneous writings of the Founders  
**Reading:** Selections from the writings of the Founders

**Thursday, July 23**  
Federalist and anti-Federalist writings, part 1  
**Reading:** Selections from the *Federalist* and anti-Federalist writings  
*Final paper topics due*

**Thursday, July 30**  
Federalist and anti-Federalist writings, part 2  
**Reading:** Selections from the *Federalist* and anti-Federalist writings

**Thursday, August 6**  
Virtue and politics  
Summary of course

**Monday, August 17**  
*Final papers due*
MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

**Honor Code:**
*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

**Disabilities Statement:** If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.