# Philosophy of Politics (Second-level Degree)

## Prof. Alessio Musio

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course intends to provide students with the fundamentals of a philosophical perspective of political phenomena regarding one of its most enigmatic terms, that of sovereignty. With the intent of dealing with the transformation that it undergoes in the era of digital technologies, of ubiquitous computing and what is known as ‘post-truth’, compared with its twentieth century semantics, the aim of the course is to try and find a way out of the *labyrinth* that it has always represented, taking into account the complexity of our historical context.

At the end of the course, students will thereby have acquired knowledge of the fundamental elements of a philosophical reflection on *power*, and be able to critically discuss the theses of some of the most important Twentieth Century authors who – like Hans Kelsen, Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt – have tried to define it, to then compare them with the novel challenges of our time, represented by algorithms’ *injunctive power* (Éric Sadin) and by *surveillance capitalism* (Shoshana Zuboff).

***COURSE CONTENT***

The examination will follow three pathways. The first shows how sovereignty transforms itself if it assumed to originate from the phenomena of *fear*, *money* and *relationships*. The second intends to reflect on the relationship between *technology* and *forms of power*, starting from the question whether the former may be interpreted as an extension of human sovereignty or as its dangerous *neutralisation*, based on Schmitt’s hypothesis. The third aims to detect how the contemporary phenomena of *algorithmic aletheia* and what is known as *surveillance capitalism,* not only assert themselves as a form of commercial exploitation, but generate a radical transformation in the forms of power.

Overview of contents:

* Sovereignty amid *decisionism, normality* and *exception* (in the background of a rereading of the theoretical debate between Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt).
* The dialectics between the human ability to *begin* and to *control* action, in order to understand Arendt’s solution to the *labyrinth of sovereignty*.
* Scenario transformation vis-à-vis the Twentieth Century: for a phenomenology of reconfiguration *polis* in the digital age.
* The position of the individual entity at the crossroads between *technological care*, *right to secrecy* and *algorithmic injunction* to act.

***READING LIST***

A. Musio, *Etica della sovranità. Questioni antropologiche in Kelsen e Schmitt*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2011 (specifically pp. 9-62; 93-148; 163-231).

C. Schmitt, *Dialogo sul potere*, It. trans., Adelphi, Milan 2012 (including the *Afterword* by G. Gurisatti).

A. Papa (edited by), *Il pensiero prurale. Rileggere Hannah Arendt*, Mimesis Edizioni, Milano 2022 (at least two essays).

A. Pessina, *L’essere altrove. L’esperienza umana nell’epoca dell’intelligenza artificiale*, Mimesis, Milan, 2023.

E. Sadin, *Critica della ragione artificiale. Una difesa dell’umanità*, It. trans. F. Bononi, Luiss University Press, Rome, 2019 (specifically pp. 7-151).

S. Zuboff, *Il capitalismo della sorveglianza. Il futuro dell’umanità nell’era dei nuovi poteri*, It. trans., Luiss University Press, Rome, 2019 (specifically pp. 13-36; 213-246; 269-308; 433-460).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures in the classroom. Three hours per week.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will take an oral exam that will assess: 1) whether they have actually read the specified texts; 2) the ability to present the content of texts; 3) their aptitude for discussing and expressing arguments with clarity, detecting links between covered topics; 4) proficiency in the use of an appropriate and adequate lexicon; 5) presentation correctness and efficacy.

First and foremost, students will have to prove that they have acquired knowledge of the key concepts contained in the works of the authors included in the course programme. In the oral exam, students will have to show that they are aware of the topics and fundamental issues discussed during lectures, with a special focus on: the delineation of the three different forms of sovereignty that arise from the phenomenon of *fear,* of *money* and of the *fullness of the relationship*; the theoretical elements of the dispute between Kelsen and Schmitt; the novelty represented by digital civilisation.

Assessment criteria will include the pertinence of answers, the appropriate use of the specific lexicon, the well-argued and coherent structuring of arguments, the ability to detect conceptual links and open questions.

*Marks:*

30 with honours: excellent, solid knowledge, excellent expressive language skills, comprehensive understanding of concepts and topics.

30: very good, comprehensive and adequate knowledge, correct and well-structured expressive language skills.

27-29: good, acceptable knowledge, fundamentally correct expressive language skills.

24-26: fairly good knowledge, albeit non comprehensive and not always correct.

21-23: generally good but superficial knowledge. Frequently not appropriate expressive language skills.

18-21: pass mark.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites related to content in order for students to attend the course, nevertheless students are expected to have acquired a basic knowledge of philosophy and to have an interest in, and intellectual curiosity towards ethical-political topics, and an adequate inclination for argumentation.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.