

Political Prudence – A European and a South Asian Tradition in IR Theory

M.A. Seminar, WS 2016/17

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Course Description:

Prudence is a premodern concept, but it has remained relevant for International Relations theory up to the present. Prudence is generally seen as a 'virtue' and associated with restraint, moderation, caution or balance. However, we are not concerned with abstract philosophical ethics. Our focus is the concept of political prudence in premodern and modern (and 'post-modern') IR theory. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VI), Aristotle, equates 'prudence' with 'statecraft'.

However, the origins of the concept of political prudence do not exclusively lie in European antiquity, but in ancient China and India as well. With respect to the Asian traditions of political prudence, we will concentrate on Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. In the seminar, we shall interrogate the (far-reaching) similarities between Aristotle's and Kautilya's concept of political prudence.

And, we shall examine how both Aristotle's and Kautilya's concept of political prudence has influenced early modern IR theory (Niccolo Machiavelli) and modern IR theory (Hans J. Morgenthau and John H. Herz) as well as the constructivist approach to international relations.

Political prudence is no fixed list of 'recipes' for the conduct of international politics, but a 'conceptual space' in which political reality is fully taken into account, yet the chance (and need) for political amelioration remains a real option for political action. And that is why the above named European and Asian political theorists have evidently thought of political prudence as a thought-figure so valuable that its interrogation is necessary and its explication possible.

The seminar "Political Prudence – A European and a South Asian Tradition in IR Theory" is registered at the University eLearning platform. You will find it opening "Fakultät für Wirtschafts-und Sozialwissenschaften" and then "Politische Wissenschaft". All course materials and other details have been uploaded there.

Calendar:

Oct. 27, 2016:

Introductory Session -- Prudence: an intellectual and ethical mode of action in politics

Nov. 3, 2016:

Aristotle and Political Prudence

Nov. 10, 2016:

Kautilya's idea of political prudence: anvikshiki & political science

Nov. 17, 2016:

Kautilya's idea of political prudence: character formation & normativity (dharma)

Nov. 24, 2016:

Kautilya's idea of political prudence: core features of prudent statecraft

Dec.1, 2016:

Kautilya's idea of political prudence: prudent foreign policy

Dec. 8, 2016:

Political prudence in the works of Alfarabi & Nizzam ul Mulk

Dec. 15, 2016:

Machiavelli and political prudence

Dec. 22, 2016:

Political Prudence: E.H. Carr & Hans J. Morgenthau

Jan. 12, 2017:

John Herz' idea of political prudence I

Jan. 19, 2017:

John Herz' idea of political prudence II

Jan. 26, 2017:

Political Prudence: Premodern Kautilyan thought in modern Indian politics

Febr. 2, 2017:

From premodern to 'postmodern' political prudence: Summary discussion

Febr. 9, 2017:

Political Prudence: Discussion of term papers