Lecture #3: Introduction to Political Theory

(2,000 years in approximately 40 minutes)

Relevant Classical Political Theory

I. Greeks (and Romans): Definition of Politics and the Polity (polis)
          (Plato and Aristotle)
                    Redeaux: Typologies of rule

II. Plato: "The Apology";
          A. Death of Socrates = Disrepute/Injustice of Democracy***
                    1.   Decision Rules (Majority vs. Minority)
                    2.   Demagogues and Demagoguery
                    3.   "Mob Rule"

III. Thucydides: "The Peloponnesian War"
          B. Invasion of Sicily
                    1.   The people can be flattered and fooled
                    2.   The people can be wrong
                    3.   The people can bring disaster to all
          C. Plato's resolution
                    1. Rule by "Philosopher Kings"
          D. Everyone else's resolution
                    1. Democracy does not work!

III. Judeo-Christian ethos on politics
          A. View of state/polity/politics as separate sphere
                    ("Render unto Caesar…..")
          B. Equalitarian value/premise (hence, egalitarianism)

          C. Nietzsche's critique ("equalitarian impulse" and "the herd instinct")

                    1. Democracy rests on egalitarianism (from Judeo-Christian tradition)

Basic Modern Political Theory

IV. Machievelli: "The Prince" and "Discourses"

V. Social Contract Theory