17.03. Introduction to Political Thought
Lecture Outline: Machiavelli, *The Prince* (chapters 1-15)

Dates: 1469  Birth
1498  Confirmed as second chancellor to the Florentine republic
1512  Spanish troops attack and Florence surrenders
      Machiavelli convicted and punished for involvement in anti-Medici conspiracy
1513  Wrote *The Prince*
1515-19  Wrote *Discourses on Livy*
1527  Death

I. Background
   A. Personal
      1. Political career in Florentine republic (1498-1513)
      2. Torture by Medicis, effort to get position in new Medici regime
      3. Involvement in circle of republicans
   B. Context of the Renaissance
      1. Ancient Rome as the model
      2. Liberty as collective self-government
   C. Puzzles
      1. Relationship between *The Prince* and *Discourses*
      2. Is there a conception of morality at work in Machiavelli’s political thought?

II. Machiavelli as the first modern thinker
   A. Rejection of traditional Christian conception of virtue
   B. Mirror for princes literature
      1. Advice manuals for rulers: win over Fortuna with classical Roman virtues
         a. The good man is the political man
         b. Honor, modesty, and mercy make a great prince
      2. Machiavelli shows the contradictions of this literature
         a. Significance of sheer power in political life
         b. Successful prince has to cultivate different virtues
   C. Machiavellian virtue: *virtù*
      1. Not any particular moral virtue
      2. A skill or capacity for flexibility, ability to adapt oneself to the times and to fortune

III. Ways of establishing principalities
   A. Leaders who acquire power solely through *virtù*
   B. Leaders who rely in part on fortune
      1. Don’t rely on the good will of others
      2. Control your own arms
      3. Cesare Borgia as example of *virtù*
   C. Leaders who acquire power through wickedness
      1. Agathocles the Sicilian
      2. *Virtù* cannot be equated with viciousness

IV. Importance of military art/good arms