

TO: STUDENTS IN DR. THOMPSON'S GREAT BOOKS SEMINAR
FROM: DR. JANE KELLEY RODEHEFFER (VISITING
PROFESSOR)

RE: READING QUESTIONS FOR *THE PRINCE*

FOR THURSDAY 3/16/2012: LETTER TO LORENZO DE'
MEDICI

AND CHAPTERS I-XII. Be sure to note textual
passages that support your answers.

1. Plato and Aristotle both wrote treatises on Politics. As you are reading, think back to the *Republic*. What issue was Plato most concerned with in the organization of the state? What issue was Aristotle concerned with in the *Nicomachean Ethics*? What is the major focus of Machiavelli's discussion of the state and how does it differ from these previous thinkers?
2. How would you describe Machiavelli's view of human nature? What kinds of behavior should the Prince count on from his citizens, allies, and advisors?
3. Machiavelli states that the prince cannot count on good fortune alone to secure power. What other attributes must The Prince possess? How are these attributes or virtues different from, say, the virtues Dante sees as important to human flourishing in the *Purgatorio*?
4. Why is it more difficult for a Prince to maintain his rule in a new principality than in a state or kingdom he has inherited?
5. In discussing the example of Cesare, Machiavelli suggests that Cesare's prowess cannot overcome the "malice of fortune." What are some examples of the "prowess" or "stratagems" used by Cesare to maintain his state? What "malice of fortune" besets him?
6. Machiavelli uses the example of Agathocles as a Prince who "used cruelty well." What does he mean? In what ways does a Prince use cruelty badly?

7. According to Machiavelli, why is it better for a Prince to rise from among the people than from the nobles?
8. What is an ecclesiastical principality? Why was Alexander II more successful than any other Pope in increasing the power of the ecclesiastical principality of Machiavelli's time?
9. In chapter XII, Machiavelli states that the "main foundations of every state... are good laws and good arms." Why? Why are mercenaries useless? What has happened to Italy under the leadership of mercenaries? (Hint: look up "ignominy").
10. What part of Machiavelli's view of human nature or worldview do you find most accurate? What do you find most inaccurate or disturbing?
11. Develop one discussion question, based on the text, for our seminar tomorrow.