POLS-Y 381 Classical Political Thought
Throughout this course we will survey the foundations of Western political thought from the times of Plato (4th century BC) to the decline of the Middle Ages. Two broad issues – the vision of a perfect society and the rules of human order – will be the themes of our analysis. We will look at the major texts in ancient and medieval political thought (journeying a bit into Renaissance) with an eye on two recurrent motifs: how the writers of the past responded to the challenges of their times and how the events they studied and/or witnessed influenced their ideas and philosophies; and how relevant their beliefs are to our thinking about politics and political life in general. The course is, therefore, designed to touch upon notions that are both historical and contemporary in nature: to comprehend the key theoretical concepts that, while originated in the oft-forgotten past, have shaped the climate of political discussions in the subsequent eras, and to engage in a critical and civilized dialogue about politics and a general condition of Homo sapiens.