SEMINAR QUESTIONS: MACHIAVELLI'S THE PRINCE

Based on your knowledge and understanding of the Prince, answer the following questions. Use specific examples (quotations) from the text, where possible, to support your point-of-view (POV). Be prepared for a follow-up seminar/class discussion in which you will have an opportunity to share your views on this controversial topic.

Machiavelli studied the political motivations of people in power, how they acquired and kept it. In addition to drawing upon numerous historical examples and his view of human nature, he based many of his observations on Florentine political life. (Adapted in part from World History: Perspectives on the Past. DC Heath, 1992).

1. What is Machiavelli’s purpose for writing the Prince?

2. Who is Machiavelli’s ideal Prince? Why?

3. What exactly does Machiavelli mean by Virtu?

4. Why does Machiavelli consider the art of war to be so important to a prince?

5. Analyze and interpret the following quote: “…he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation; for a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him…”

6. Analyze and interpret the following quote: “Hence it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity.”

7. React to the following quote: “Is it better (for a prince) to be loved than feared or feared than loved?”

8. How does Machiavelli answer his own question in #7? Do you agree or disagree with his response?

9. Why, according to Machiavelli, is it important for a prince to inspire fear?

10. Who do you believe is most likely to govern according to Machiavelli’s principles?


12. Are Machiavelli’s ideas relevant in the world today? Why or why not? If so, in what specific context? Please provide specific examples to support your POV.