

Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*

Discussion Questions

1. Name three recurring themes in *The Prince*.
2. Why does Machiavelli claim that it is better for a prince “to be both loved and feared?” Is it possible for a prince to be both?
3. How does Machiavelli define virtue? Was his definition a break from the Western tradition of political philosophy that preceded him?
4. Does *The Prince* present justice as nothing more than the interest of the stronger?
5. What constraints on a prince's freedom of action does Machiavelli recognize?
6. Does Machiavelli believe that ethical considerations have a role to play in the conduct of a prince?
7. According to Machiavelli, what roles do fate and fortune play in human life?
8. According to Machiavelli in Chapter 21, what must a prince do to be esteemed?
9. What kinds of states does Machiavelli describe? How do they differ from one another, and why?
10. Who was Cesare Borgia? Why does Machiavelli use him as an example of a capable prince? Was there an overriding goal for actions of his like the execution of Remirro De Orco?
11. What kinds of historical examples does Machiavelli use to demonstrate his ideas? How does his choice of examples reflect the humanist cultural ideals of the Renaissance?
12. What are the qualities of the ideal prince, according to Machiavelli? How do these ideals compare to those expressed in other works you have read for this class?