

2005-2006 Executive Precepts Program

(Dallas and Palm Beach)

Sponsored by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions
Princeton University

Politics and Ethics

This year's topic is **Politics and Ethics**. We will examine the connection between moral obligation and political order, between our longing for perfection and our need for practical action, between virtue and desire; between self and circumstance. Our texts will encompass ancient literary and philosophical texts on the restraint of desire and the satisfaction of emotional impulse. Our later readings will examine political and moral perfection, considering the ways in which the ideal of perfection is terrifying, boring, superfluous, essential, and funny.

Please don't be alarmed or concerned with the reading list; the recommended readings for each monthly session are generally no more than 20-30 pages. This is meant to be fun and not terribly time consuming.

Schedule and Reading List

September 2005: Plato, *Gorgias* (emphasis on 480e-489c, 516a-527e)

October 2005: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 23-47 (1101a35-1109b18)

November 2005: Euripides, *Medea*

December 2005: Marcus Aurelius, *The Emperor's Handbook (Meditations)* (selections)

January 2006: More, *Utopia*, Book II

February 2006: Moliere, *The Misanthrope*

March 2006: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*

April 2006: Dostoyevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* (from *The Brothers Karamazov*)

June 2006: Final Precept with Prof. Robert P. George