What is Freedom? Machiavelli’s Discourses – 2/25/15

Agenda

• Class Housekeeping: Debate, Exam Study Guide, Extra Office Hours – Tuesday, March 3rd – 8:30am to 10:00am
• SGD of DQs
• Quick Review of Last Time:
  o Machiavelli’s Realism: Human Nature, Flux/Fortuna, Virtu’
  o Machiavelli’s Republicanism as a Philosophy of Freedom
• Republican Constitutional Convention Exercise
• Big Ideas in The Discourses

ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISE = Republican Constitutional Convention: imagine you are delegates to a constitutional convention devoted to amending the American Constitution to make it more republican (as Machiavelli seems to understand republicanism). In your groups, please come up with 2 republican constitutional amendments. Your amendments should be inspired by arguments Machiavelli presents in the Discourses. For each of your proposed amendments, you will present the following to your fellow delegates:

• A description of the proposed amendment – if you’d like to draft exact wording, you can share that.
• An explanation of what is republican about your proposed amendment – direct reference to actual text in the Discourses is strongly encouraged (obviously, the context in which Machiavelli was writing was quite different, but you should be able to find passages that serve as inspiration for contemporary republican thought)

After the first round of proposals, we will open the floor for debate and discussion of the amendments. The major question animating our discussion will be:

• Would the adoption of the proposed amendment enhance or undermine freedom? Explain your position.