POLITICAL THEORY: brief overview for 17 C. background

Medieval Christianity:

St. Augustine, City of God  413 AD
Latin title:  *De civitate Dei contra paganos*
*(On the City of God, against the pagans)*

410 Sack of Rome by Visigoths (German tribe)
why did “eternal Rome” fall to the barbarians?

**City of Man** (Rome) versus **City of God** (Heaven)

Rome:  only a human creation, therefore mortal & will perish
state as punishment for original sin (of Adam)
includes injustice, inequality

**City of God:**  eternal, not of this earth, includes only the saved
Medieval philosophy:

Hierarchical universe
“Great Chain of Being”
from God to lesser forms of being

“Natural law” is of divine origin

God in Heaven with the saved
Angels (pure spirits)
Humans
Animals
Plants
Rocks
Hell = evil spirits, damned souls
Medieval political theory

**Germanic kingship:** elective -- warriors select the King
Tacitus *Germania* (*late 1st century, 98 AD*)

**Medieval feudal monarchy:**
- Limitations on power of king by nobles, church
- Estates represent corporate social bodies:
  - clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie (town dwellers)
  - must consent to taxation, legislation

**Medieval genre of advice to princes:** idealized image of ruler
*Speculum principis*, or “mirror for princes”
displays virtues of the “good Christian king”
Renaissance realism:

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* 1513 Florence, Italy

context of French & Hapsburg invasions of Italy, 1494-1530

beginning of modern political theory:
  separation of politics from religious virtue

asserts the autonomy of the political sphere:
  traditional morality does not apply to politics

stability of state is the highest political goal:
  duty of the Prince is to defend his borders, to stay in power
16th C. France

Renaissance
Humanist version
of the
Chain of Being

What’s missing?
God & Angels

Vocabulary:
Est = it exists, it is
Vivit = it lives
Sentit = it feels, has sensation, moves
Intelligit = he understands
16th C Reformation:

Martin Luther, Germany:
Princes have the right to choose the religion
1555 Peace of Augsburg: *cuius regio, eius religio*
(whose the reign, his the religion)
no right of resistance to any Prince, Christian, Moslem or pagan
persecuted Christians must choose emigration or martyrdom

Calvin in Geneva: context: in exile from French Catholic King
Swiss revolt against Holy Roman Empire
“God may raise up hidden avengers from among his people”

Calvinist origins of

17th C: Religious theory of revolution against tyrants

French Huguenots in French Wars of Religion 1562-1589
English Puritans in Civil War 1640-1689
17th C: Divine Right of Kings

traditional descending theory of power from God above is re-asserted by monarchs (both Protestant & Catholic)

England Stuarts: against Calvinist Puritan revolutionaries (302 Week 2)

France Louis XIV: against Calvinist French Huguenots (302 Week 4)
17th C: Contract theories of government

ascending theory of origin of state by agreement from below

based on theoretical concepts of
state of nature, state of war, social contract

Hobbes, Leviathan 1651 support for absolutism
either Stuart Kings or Cromwell

Locke, Second Treatise of Government 1689
social contract argument for limited, constitutional govt.