

Discourses Upon *Discourses Upon Livy*  
(and also *Livy*)

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# Machiavelli



Image source: [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niccolò_Machiavelli_Bust.jpg)

- Famously cynical author on political theory
- In Florentine public service from just before the Medici were expelled to when they returned.
- Wrote *The Prince*, a book of advice for new monarchs
- Also wrote *Discourses Upon Livy*, book of advice for republics

## Discourses Upon Livy

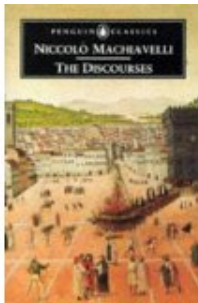


Image source: amazon.com

- Made up of a bunch of tiny little chapters.
- Usually they take some anecdote from Livy's *History of Rome* as a jumping-off point to make some extremely general claim about government.
- The chapter titles usually contain the entire piece of advice. For example, Book 2, chapter 11: *It is not a Wise Course to make an Alliance with a Ruler whose Reputation is greater than his Strength*
- I had forgotten just how vague the history was!

## Livy's *History of Rome*

...

123. War with the Veientes
124. War with the Veientes
125. War with the Veientes
126. Invented new system of government that would influence politics for the next 2600 years
127. War with the Samnites
128. War with the Samnites
129. Scandal!
130. War with the Latins
131. War with the Veientes
132. Scandal!

...

- History of the Roman kingdom and early republic
- Fun stories buried in tedious detail about wars

## 3-Sentence History of Rome

- ① **Kings!** There were seven kings of Rome. The ruling family were the **Tarquins**.
- ② **The Republic!** Two consuls, one Senate, eventually tribunes.
- ③ **The Empire!** Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, ...

## Fun story #1: Hit the road, Collatinus

- The patricians (aristocracy) become enraged when the king's son, Sextus Tarquinius, rapes Lucretia, wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus.
- Under the leadership of Collatinus and Lucius Junius Brutus, the Tarquins are expelled from Rome.

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- Relevant *Discourses* chapter: *What made the Romans less ungrateful to their Citizens than were the Athenians?*



## Fun story #2: The Decemvirii

- The patricians become enraged by sentences that have been passed on some of their number by plebeian tribunes.
- Ambassadors are sent to Athens to copy out the law and bring it back.
- The **Decemvirate** is appointed to reform the laws of Rome. There is no appeal from this body.
- Surprise! They become mad with power and refuse to disband!

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- *The dictatorial authority did good and not harm to the Roman Republic; and that the authority which Citizens take away, not those are given them by free suffrage, are pernicious to Civil Society*
- *The reason why the creation of the Decemvirs in Rome was harmful to the liberty of that Republic, notwithstanding that it was created by public and free suffrage*

## Fun story #3: Titus Manlius the Attention-Seeker

- Very successful military career; however. . .
- Threatened tribune with a dagger to free his father!
- Always wore a golden chain that he took from the corpse of a Gaul killed in single combat!
- Later, killed his own son for engaging enemy forces in battle without permission! (Even though the son won).

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- Relevant chapter: *What Kind of Reputation or Gossip or Opinion causes the Populace to begin to favour a Particular Citizen; and whether the Populace appoints to Offices with Greater Prudence than does a Prince*

## Why you should care

- ① Our political system is more similar to Republican Rome's than you would think, considering that it is roughly 2100 years later.
- ② But their institutions and decisions were pretty much entirely ad-hoc and scandal-driven. Kind of disturbing, huh?
- ③ Fun stories are fun!
  - You like fun, don't you?