In Western legal and political thought, the common good (bonum commune) has constantly been considered an essential requirement for the legitimation of government and law. The authority of Isidore of Seville, Gratian, Thomas Aquinas has spread and maintained this assumption throughout the centuries. In another direction, the discussion on the common good has been intertwined with reflections on the origin of private property as an institution born from the ius gentium starting from a primordial commonality of natural goods. This idea found expression in convergent teachings coming from both civil and canon law, which had points of connection with ancient philosophical thought. This idea has historically resurfaced in different times and places, as the basis of the obligation to provide for common needs in moments of economic or health crisis, or to justify the revendication of common goods that different appropriation processes [legitimized by legal schemes (lordship, fiefdom, military conquest, etc.), or arising from mere force or abuse] had removed from the availability of the communities of a given territory. Law, theology and political science converged, beyond the distinctions of their respective scientific and methodological bases, in a reflection that concerned the definition of the common good of secular institutions and the Church. The course intends to explore some of these historical and intellectual paths in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, along an itinerary from which spring some distinctive features of Western civilization.

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