

PLATO

Philosophy 451 = Classics 451
Fall 2007
Monday and Wednesday, 1:00-2:30
Wilson 104

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Monday and Wednesday, 11-12,
and by appointment
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Description

This course provides an examination of some of Plato's most important dialogues, typically including the Gorgias, Phaedo, and Republic, with the aim of grasping the development of Plato's most influential thoughts in ethics and in metaphysics and epistemology. In order to provide both historical understanding and philosophical evaluation, attention will be paid to the context and structure of the dialogues and to the best of recent secondary literature.

In this semester's instantiation of the course, we will study the Euthyphro, Apology, Meno, Phaedo, and Republic. We will cover the full range of philosophical issues in these dialogues. The central question is, How should one live? Closely connected to this are questions concerning whether and, if so, how it is possible to have knowledge about how one should live. More particular questions include: what is the relation between divine commands and ethical requirements? what is philosophy and should one be a philosopher? what is virtue? what is knowledge and how is inquiry possible? what is the distinction between knowledge and true belief? what do experts in, say, medicine or mathematics know? what is there (to be known)? what are causes (such as the experts might cite in their explanations)? what is responsible for life? are human beings immortal? should we fear death? what is justice and should one be just? how would an ideal society (legislative and executive institutions, defense, economy, families) be arranged, and what is the relation between such an ideal and everyday reality? what is the best explanation of psychological phenomena such as mental conflict and weakness of will? what makes good things good? what is the relation between art and truth? and how can art help or hurt our attempt to live well?

Prerequisites

This class is an in-depth survey, designed primarily to give graduate students in philosophy a broad introduction to Plato's philosophical achievement.

The official prerequisites are simple: the course is open to anyone who is a graduate student in philosophy OR who has completed at least one philosophy class at the 300-level (or its equivalent at another university) and at least two philosophy courses overall OR who has the permission of the instructor.

The unofficial prerequisites are more important, and they inform the instructor's permission. Simply put, it will be difficult to keep up with this course if one does not have (1) some comfortable acquaintance with philosophy, (2) some comfortable acquaintance with Plato, and (3) a significant amount of time in which to study the required readings. Any student who has done well in my 300-level survey of ancient philosophy should have the necessary comfort-level with philosophy and with Plato, and other routes to the informal prerequisites are possible. But these requirements should be taken seriously. It is possible to overcome some deficit in one's philosophical background or one's past experience with Plato, but this will require extra reading and re-reading, which will require still more time.

Grades and Requirements

A. Participation. Because the class is designed to provide an advanced survey of Plato, the instructor will do a lot of talking to cover an extensive amount of ground. But he expects to be interrupted with questions at any moment, and will be disappointed if he is not interrupted. Like a fight at a hockey game, discussion could break out at any moment. All students are expected to be ready and willing to participate. (bonus points at instructor's discretion)

B. Writing. There are two options.

(1) Two short papers (maximum 2500 words each, excluding notes), one due at **noon on Friday, 12 October**, and the other due at **noon on Friday, 14 December**. The papers should be submitted as e-mail attachments, and they should include a word count. Some topics will be made available in class, but students are free to write on a topic of their own choosing, so long as that topic was clearly raised in class about the Euthyphro, Apology, Meno, or Phaedo (for the first paper) or Republic (for the second). (100 points each)

(2) One longer, research paper (maximum 7500 words, excluding notes), due at **noon on Friday, 14 December**. As a research paper, this is expected to take account of the literature in the field. (200 points)

The second option is available only by petition, and petitions are due by **5 October**. If you are interested, express your interest to me in writing by then. (An email suffices. No, you do not have to have a settled topic at that point. But you'd better have some ideas. The second option is especially designed for graduate students in philosophy to work an essay toward a QP.)

C. Exam. There will be a final exam to test for acquaintance with Plato's philosophical achievement. The test will consist of identifying ten of twelve short passages from dialogues assigned in this course. Identifications must explain what is being said, the significance of what is being said to the dialogue, and the broader significance of what is being said to philosophy. The last of these three desiderata requires situating the view expressed in the passage in relation to some philosophical question of enduring interest and in relation to some other answer to the question or some other reasoning for the same answer. (100 points)

The deadlines are firm, and tardiness will be penalized by ten points per twenty-four hours or fraction thereof. An incomplete for additional work on a research paper is available by a written petition that specifies a new deadline, but the standards for papers handed in later will be significantly higher.

It should not be necessary to say, but all work submitted for credit in this class must be the student's own and written for this particular class. If ideas or words are borrowed without attribution from another person or are borrowed from work done for another class, or if there is any other violation of the academic integrity policy printed in the course listings, the student will automatically fail the course and be referred to the committee on academic integrity.

Texts

I have ordered three **required texts** at Mallinckrodt:

Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works (Hackett)
 Fine, ed. Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology (Oxford)
 Fine, ed. Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul (Oxford)

Required secondary readings that do not appear in Plato 1 or Plato 2 are available online, most of them as pdf files because they appear in a journal to which Olin has an electronic subscription (through JSTOR or some similar service) or because I have put them on electronic reserve through Olin's E-Res. To access these pdf files, you will need to use a computer on campus, or you will need to use Olin's server as a proxy (for which see <http://library.wustl.edu/about/proxy.html>). You will also need Adobe Acrobat Reader (a free download from <http://www.adobe.com>) or some other software for displaying and printing pdf files (e.g., Preview in Mac OS X). To find an article in a journal to which Olin has an electronic subscription, locate the journal in Olin's online catalog, or search from Olin's list of electronic journals. To find the articles that are available on E-Res, navigate to this course's page from <http://eres.wustl.edu/>, and use the password 'forms' (just the five characters between the inverted commas).

Students who do not read Greek should look at multiple **translations** of the dialogues for any passage that they discuss in detail in their papers, to ensure that they are not relying on an idiosyncratic translation. The library, used bookstores, and the web are filled with alternative translations. For the Republic, there is a brand new one by C.D.C. Reeve (from Hackett Publishing) that is quite reliable. The newer renderings in the Penguin series are generally good, and the old volume of collected dialogues edited by Hamilton and Cairns is convenient and serviceable. Be very wary of translations by Benjamin Jowett and Robin Waterfield, and note that most of the free translations on the web are unfortunately by Jowett.

Students looking to do **additional secondary reading**—this will include all those who are writing longer papers—will find references in the required secondary literature, in Plato 1 and Plato 2, and in the relevant articles of the on-line Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Additional references can be discovered via The Philosopher's Index and L'Année Philologique; both of these databases are available electronically through Olin's website. There is also a terrific bibliography of work on the Republic in the new Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic, ed. Ferrari.

Note for Readers of Greek

If there is interest, I will be happy to meet once a week to read (in Greek) and discuss (in English) a short passage of that week's required reading. I will make available photocopies of the selected passage each week.

Readers of Greek should know that there is a new Oxford Classical Texts edition for the Republic (ed. S.R. Slings), as well as the Apology, Euthyphro, and Phaedo (Platonis Opera, ed. Duke et al., vol. 1). For the Meno, we will read the old OCT (Platonis Opera, ed. Burnet, vols. 5 and 2, respectively).

Some Advice about the Reading Assignments

The texts by Plato are more important than the secondary reading, but the latter are useful for two purposes. First, they frame questions and interpretations that the lectures will take up. Second, they offer some models of what the philosophical study of Plato involves.

Often, the assignment for Plato is of the form 'Phaedo, esp. 69e-78b'. That means that you should be acquainted with the entire Phaedo, and you should have studied 69e-78b with great care. The class session will focus on the particular passage, but the instructor will assume familiarity with the whole dialogue to develop readings of the particular passage.

You are strongly encouraged to take notes on the primary text all semester long. Try to outline what is happening in each dialogue by tracing the logical relations among the claims the characters make. There are three reasons to do this. First, it will force you to pay attention as you read, and you need to do that with texts as playful and impressionistic as Plato's dialogues sometimes are. Second, the resulting outlines will greatly facilitate reviewing for the exam and finding relevant texts for your papers. Third, these outlines will come in handy should you find yourself teaching a Platonic dialogue someday. To make these outlines maximally useful, you should do them electronically, and you should revise them after you re-read and after class.

In sum, my advice is to approach these assignments in six stages. (1) Look through the full dialogue to get familiarity. (2) Study the particular passage carefully, and outline it on your computer. (3) Read the assigned secondary reading, and add annotations to your electronic outline. (4) Re-read the particular passage, to assess the reading(s) introduced by the secondary literature and to adjust your outline. (5) Attend class, with a hard-copy of your outline and your texts. (6) Adjust your electronic notes, and re-read any passages for which the lecture called your understanding into question.

Syllabus of Assignments

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| Aug 29 | <i>Introduction</i>
(optional:) R. Kraut, "Plato," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (www)
(optional:) D. Nails, "Socrates," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (www) |
| Sept 5 | <i>What Socratic Piety is Not</i>
Plato, <u>Euthyphro</u>
P. Geach, "Plato's <u>Euthyphro</u> : An Analysis and Commentary," <u>Monist</u> 50 (1966): 369-382 (E-Res) |
| Sept 10 | <i>What Socratic Piety Is</i>
Plato, <u>Apology</u>
G. Vlastos, "Socratic Piety," in <u>Plato 2</u> , 56-77 |
| Sept 12 | <i>Virtue and Happiness</i>
Plato, <u>Meno</u> , esp. 70a-80d
Plato, <u>Euthydemus</u> 278d-282d
T. Irwin, "Socrates the Epicurean?" in <u>Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates</u> , ed. H. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 198-213 (E-Res) |

- Sept 17 *Meno's Paradox and Learning as Recollection*
Plato, Meno, esp. 80d-100b
G. Fine, "Inquiry in the Meno," in The Cambridge Companion to Plato, ed. R. Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 200-226 (E-Res)
D. Scott, "Platonic Recollection," in Plato 1, pp. 93-102 (only)
- Sept 19 *Philosophy as an Otherworldly Way of Life*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 57a-69e
C. Bobonich, on the Phaedo, in his Plato's Utopia Recast (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 13-41 and 482-429 (E-Res)
- Sept 24 *Introduction to the Forms*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 69e-78b
Plato, Symposium 211a-b
Plato, Theaetetus 151d-157d
Aristotle, Metaphysics 987a29-b8, 1078b11-32, and 1086a32-b13 (E-Res)
A. Nehamas, "Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World," in Plato 1, 171-191
- Sept 26 *Forms and Recollection*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 72b-84b
D. Scott, "Platonic Recollection," in Plato 1, 93-124
- Oct 1 *Forms and Causes*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 84c-102a
D. Sedley, "Platonic Causes," Phronesis 43 (1998): 114-132 (Olin online)
- Oct 3 NO CLASS — Instructor out of town
- Oct 5 Deadline to petition for longer essay option**
- Oct 8 *Forms and the Soul*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 95a-107b
D. Frede, "The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's Phaedo 102a-107a," Phronesis 23 (1978): 27-41 (E-Res)
- Oct 10 *Immortality and the Philosophical Life*
Plato, Phaedo, esp. 107c-118a
D. Bostock, "The Soul and Immortality in Plato's Phaedo," in Plato 2, 404-424
- Oct 12 First short essay due at NOON**
- Oct 15 *What Justice is Not*
Plato, Republic I
T. Irwin, "Republic I," in his Plato's Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 169-180 (E-Res)
R. Barney, "Calicles and Thrasymachus," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, esp. §§1-3 (www)

- Oct 17 *The Challenge*
Republic II 357a-367e
 N. Denyer, "The Origins of Justice" (part), in SYZETESIS: Studi sull'epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante, vol. 1 (Naples: Gaetano Macchiaroli, 1983), 133-152, esp. 133-144 (E-Res)
 T. Irwin, "Republic 2: Questions about Justice," in Plato 2, 164-185
- Oct 22 *The First City*
Republic II 367e-373a
 M. Schofield, "Plato on the Economy," in Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms (London: Routledge, 1999), 69-82 (E-Res)
- Oct 24 *The Second City*
Republic II 372c - IV 434d
 Taylor, "Plato's Totalitarianism," in Plato 2, 280-296
- Oct 29 *The Soul*
Republic IV 436b-441c
 J. Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," in Plato 2, 186-206
- Oct 31 *An Aborted Response to the Challenge*
Republic IV 441c-445e
 D. Sachs, "A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*," Philosophical Review 72 (1963): 141-158 (Olin online)
 R. Demos, "A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*?" Philosophical Review 73 (1964): 395-398 (Olin online)
 (optional:) N. Dahl, "Plato's Defense of Justice," in Plato 2, 207-234
- Nov 5 *Women and Children*
Republic V 449a-471d
 Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism," in Plato 2, 265-279
- Nov 7 *Philosophers*
Republic V 471e - VI 502a
 G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5-7" (first part), in Plato 1, 215-225
 (optional:) T. Irwin, "The Theory of Forms," in Plato 1, 143-170
- Nov 12 *What the Philosophers Know*
Republic VI 502a - VII 517c
 G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5-7" (second part), in Plato 1, 225-246
- Nov 14 *Why the Philosophers Agree to Rule*
Republic VII 517c-521c
 E. Brown, "Minding the Gap in Plato's *Republic*," Philosophical Studies 117 (2004): 275-302, esp. 275-284 with notes (E-Res)
- Nov 19 *Educating Philosophers*
Republic VII 521c-541b
 M. Burnyeat, "Platonism and Mathematics: A Prelude to Discussion," in Mathematik und Metaphysik bei Aristoteles, ed. A. Graeser (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1987), 213-240. (E-Res)

- Nov 21 NO CLASS — Thanksgiving
- Nov 26 *The First Proof*
Republic VIII 543a - IX 580c
D. Scott, "Plato's Critique of the Democratic Character," Phronesis 45 (2000): 19-37 (Olin online)
E. Brown, "Plato: Ethics and Politics in the Republic," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, §3.1 (www)
- Nov 28 *The Second and Third Proofs*
Republic IX 580c-592b
M. Nussbaum, "The Republic: True value and the standpoint of perfection," in her The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 136-164 (E-Res)
E. Brown, "Plato: Ethics and Politics in the Republic," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, §3.2 (www)
- Dec 3 *The City-Soul Analogy in Retrospect*
Republic, esp. II 357a-369a, IV 434d-436b and 441c-444e, VIII-IX
B. Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic," in Plato 2, 255-264
- Dec 5 *Art and Imitation*
Republic X 595a-608b
A. Nehamas, "Plato on Imitation and Poetry in Republic 10," in Plato on Beauty, Wisdom, and the Arts, ed. Julius Moravcsik and Philip Temko (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 47-78 (E-Res)
M. Burnyeat, "Art and Mimesis in Plato's Republic," London Review of Books (21 May 1998): 3-9 (E-Res)
- Dec 10 *Faith*
Republic X.608c-X.612a
R. Johnson, "Does Plato's Myth of Er Contribute to the Argument of the Republic?" Philosophy and Rhetoric 32 (1999): 1-13 (E-Res)
- Dec 14** **Second short or single long paper due at NOON**
- TBD Review Session
- TBA** **Exam**