

PHIL 481: Ancient Philosophy

PLATO'S *Republic*

Spring 2014

Tu, Th 1:00–2:15

Instructor: Whitney Schwab

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Office: Fine Arts 526

Office Hours: Tuesday, 3:30–4:30

Functional Competency Satisfied by this Course: Critical Analysis and Reasoning

Course Goals:

The aim of this course is to develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of Plato's *Republic*, from the first page to the last. The book will serve as a springboard to discuss fundamental philosophical questions such as: What is the best life for human beings to live? What place, if any, does morality have in the good life? What is the best political organization? What is the nature of the human soul? What is the fundamental structure of reality? What can be known and how can it be known? Although our focus will be on reading the primary text (in English translation), we will also delve into some of the scholarly debates over its interpretation as well as the cultural and political influences on Plato's writing and the influence Plato's writing had on his culture and the subsequent historical tradition.

Required Texts:

—Plato: *Republic* Translated by C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett: Indianapolis (2004)

—Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard

Assignments and Evaluation:

—**Weekly questions**, 10%: Each week, by midnight Monday, you will submit via Blackboard **two** questions that occur to you concerning the upcoming reading for that week. **NB:** In order to receive credit in this portion of the course you must turn in *every* week's questions (so, for example, if you miss a week, the highest grade you can receive in the course is 90%).

—**Papers:** 80% of your grade is based on three papers divided in the following way—40% of your grade is based evenly on two short (3-4 page) papers and 40% of your grade is based on one longer (6-8 page) final paper. **NB:** You must turn in all three papers to receive any credit for this portion of the course (so, for example, if you fail to turn in one of the papers, the highest grade you can receive is 20%).

For the two short papers, topics will be circulated two weeks in advance of the due date. For the final paper, although we will briefly discuss general issues on 4/24, you will come up with your own topic. By **5/1** you will email me the topic you plan to write about in the form of a 1-sentence statement of the main claim you will argue for. I will comment on your topic and suggest further secondary literature to consider.

–**Participation:** 10% of your grade is based on attendance and participation. It is important to note that participation is not simply a function of the amount you speak, but is a matter of being fully prepared for and engaged in the discussion at hand. This crucially involves listening to, thinking about, and responding respectfully to the comments of your classmates.

Course Policies

- Bring the book to class.
- Do not use your cell phone in class.
- I will do my best to respond to emails within two days of receiving them.
- As noted above, you must turn in *all* weekly question assignments and papers to receive credit for the respective portion of the course
- Papers must be submitted via Blackboard. I will comment and return them via Blackboard as well.
- Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances (e.g. prolonged medical illness, family bereavement) for which official documentation *must* be provided.

UMBC Statement of Values for Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC’s scholarly community in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, or the Office of Undergraduate Education.

Please note that any plagiarism will result in an F on the relevant assignment, an F for the course, and possible reporting to the relevant administrative authorities.

Tentative Schedule (alterations will be announced in class)

Listed here are the readings and (non-exhaustive) topics we will be discussing during each session. Although assigned sections are often short, they are difficult, and multiple readings are strongly advised. Since our aim is to read the entire book, it should be noted that the following schedule is extremely tentative and will almost certainly be revised on the fly. All readings marked “Secondary lit.” are required and will be posted on Blackboard.

Week 1

1/28 and 1/30: Introduction, historical and cultural issues, overview of the *Republic*

Week 2

2/4: 327a-336a10 (Conventional views of justice; what does a satisfactory account of justice require?)

2/6: 336a10-354c3 (Thrasymachus’ challenge: why think justice is good at all?)

Week 3

2/11: 357a-367e5 (Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge)

2/13: Catch-up

Week 4

2/18: 367e5-376c5 (Initial set-up of the city)

2/20: 376c6-392c6 (Musical education: content)

Secondary lit.: Alexander Nehamas, 'Plato's Pop Culture Problem, and Ours'

Week 5

2/25: 392c7-403c6 (Musical education: style)

2/27: 403c7-415d2 (Physical education and the question "who should lead?") (**First paper topics distributed**)

Week 6

3/4: 415d3-427d (Life of the guardians, unity in the Kallipolis)

3/6: 427d-434d1 (Virtues in the city)

Week 7

3/11: 434d2-445e3 (Structure and virtues of the human soul)

Secondary lit.: Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, pp. 18-34

3/13: Catch-up

3/14: First paper due by 10 PM

Week 8: Spring Break, No Classes

3/18, 3/20: No Class

Week 9

3/25: 449a-471c1 (The first two paradoxes; was Plato a feminist?)

Secondary lit.: Julia Annas, 'Plato's *Republic* and Feminism'

3/27: 471c1-480a13 (Definition of Philosopher)

Week 10

4/1: 484a-504a2 (Other qualities of a philosopher)

4/3: 504a2-511e5 (Sun and Line analogy) (**Second paper topics distributed**)

Week 11

4/8: 514a-521b11 (Allegory of the cave)

4/10: 521c1-541b5 (Philosopher's education)

Secondary lit.: Myles Burnyeat, 'Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul,' pp. 1-46

Week 12

- 4/15: Catch-up
4/17: 543a-555b2 (Timocracy and oligarchy)
4/18: Second paper due by 10 PM

Week 13

- 4/22: 555b3-569c9 (Democracy and tyranny)
4/24: 571a-577c9 (The tyrant) (**Final paper topics discussed**)
Secondary lit.: Mark Johnstone, ‘Changing Rulers in the Soul: Psychological Transitions in *Republic* 8-9’

Week 14

- 4/29: 577c9-592b6 (Happiness)
4/30: Rachel Singpurwalla’s Talk
5/1: 595a-608b3 (Poetry in the ideal city) (**Final paper topics vetted**)
Secondary lit.: Jessica Moss, ‘What is Imitative Poetry and Why is it Bad?’

Week 15

- 5/6: 608b4-612a6 (Immortality of the soul)
5/8: 612a7-621c9 (Myth of Er)

Week 16

- 5/13: Catch-up/Recap

5/20: Final paper due by 3:00 PM (**NB:** If you would like comments returned to you on this paper, write “Please comment” on the top of your paper)