

PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*
Winter 2017, Philosophy 241-01

Dr. Krisanna Scheiter

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Office Hours: TTH 1:00-2:00pm and by appointment

Time: 10:55am-12:40pm

Classroom: Visual Arts Building,
Room 216+

Office: Lamont 308

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Most people care deeply about justice and strive to live just lives. But what is justice and why should we try to be just? What if we always do the right thing, but we are constantly treated badly and as if we are untrustworthy? Should we be just even if others think we are dishonest and corrupt? Is justice worth pursuing for itself? If justice is good how do we make our cities and our fellow citizens just? What kind of ruler would make a city just? In this course we will try to answer these questions as we work our way through Plato's most famous work, *Republic*. Each class will be organized around specific question(s). We will focus most of our attention on analyzing and interpreting Plato's answer to these questions, but we will also try to answer these questions ourselves and see whether or not we agree with Plato.

REQUIRED TEXT

- Plato. *Republic*. Reeve, C. D. C. *Translated From The New Standard Greek Text* (2004).
- I may assign additional readings on Nexus as we go through the course.

ASSIGNMENTS

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|-----|--------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| 5% | Participation | 20% | First Paper (4-5pp) |
| 15% | Nexus Posts | 20% | Second Paper (4-5pp) |
| 15% | Argument Reconstruction Papers | 25% | Oral Presentation (5-7pp) |

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

- Students demonstrate the ability to read and interpret texts in philosophy.
- Students demonstrate the ability to produce written and oral discourse appropriate to philosophy.
- Students participate effectively in critical discussions of philosophical issues.
- Students present analyses of the issues examined in conceptual, historical, evaluative, or normative studies in philosophy.

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: This is a discussion-based course. Active student participation will be a central feature of the learning experience. Class discussion, office hours (in which we discuss class material), and participation in the online forums all count towards your participation grade. In order to ensure successful participation, it is important that you attend to two main tasks:

- **Reading Assignments:** You should complete the assigned reading prior to the class for which they are assigned in order to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. If you have not read philosophy before, you may find the readings difficult at first. Don't give up! As you read try to identify core claims and arguments. Take notes, jotting down questions or critiques.

- **Class Discussion:** You should contribute to class discussions regularly and in a respectful manner, either by asking questions relating to the topic or contributing your own meaningful insights. Discussion will be based on the reading assignments. One way to prepare for class discussions is by trying to answer the study questions at the end of the reading assignments.

Nexus (Discussion Board): In order to get the maximum amount of points you must post **by 10pm** the night before class. **I will not count posts that are entered after 10pm. There is no way to make up a missed post.** If you do not post on the discussion board by 10pm you will not receive any points for that post. You should post **at least one** paragraph (approx. 5 sentences) in response to the readings for the next class. You may respond to your fellow students' posts on Nexus, but it must be clear from your post that you read the material. Each post is worth 15 points. **I will take off points if the post does not demonstrate mastery of the readings. I will also take off points for substantial spelling and grammar mistakes so please read over your posts carefully.**

Papers: There are two short papers for the course. I will assign paper topics in advance and you will have a choice of topics on which to write. I will provide a guideline to writing philosophy papers. Penalty for late papers is a 3% deduction for every day that goes by after the paper is due unless an extension has been granted in advance.

Argument Reconstruction (AR): There will be a handful of short (one page) papers due throughout the term that aim at reconstructing an argument in the text. Papers should be no longer than one single-spaced page (shorter is even better). 12pt Times New Roman font is preferred. **Reconstructions are NOT summaries.** You want to be clear, to the point, even dry. Do not try to be poetic or creative in these papers. You are just identifying the conclusion and explaining how Socrates gets there, pointing out which claims he supports and which ones he does not offer any support. You do not need to provide an assessment of the arguments in the paper. We will discuss the strengths of his arguments in class.

Class Presentation: Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on a topic of her/his chose. Each presenter must meet with me to discuss her/his topic at least two weeks before the actual presentation (earlier is even better). One week before the presentation each student will submit a 5-7pp rough draft of her/his presentation through Nexus so that I may make changes and/or suggestions that should be taken into consideration when finishing the final draft of the presentation. The presentation will be graded mainly on content, but also on organization, clarity, speaking, and presentation aides (e.g. poster, PPT, handout) (see rubric for more details).

Extra Credit: This term there will be **two** ancient philosophy talks hosted by the Union College Philosophy department. Students who attend these colloquiums will receive extra credit towards their Argument Reconstruction grade. Details to come.

RESOURCES

Writing Center: The Writing Center (second floor of Schaffer Library) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. I encourage you to visit the writing center for any and all writing assignments.
<http://www.union.edu/Resources/Academic/writing/index.php>.

Accommodations: It is the policy of Union College to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please bring your accommodation ID card to your instructor's office hours as soon as possible. Your instructor will then discuss with you any necessary special arrangements. No accommodations will be provided to students who do not have an accommodation ID card from the Office of Student Support Services (x8785).

EXPECTATIONS AND CLASSROOM POLICIES

Attendance: I will take attendance every day before class. Attendance is mandatory. Missed classes will be reflected in your participation grade.

Email

- Please feel free to email me any time, but allow me 24 hours to respond.
- If you have questions about the class or the assignments please **check the syllabus** first before emailing.
- If you cannot find it on the syllabus, then send me an email.
- If you have any questions about the content of the class or would simply like to discuss some philosophical thoughts of your own do not hesitate to come to my office hours or set up an appointment. I will not discuss philosophical ideas via email.

General Expectations

- Come to class prepared and **on time**.
- Turn off your phone, **no texting**, no laptops unless absolutely necessary, no newspapers, no talking to one another unless is it part of class discussion, no sleeping. **Any of the above behaviors will lower your participation grade.**
- You are expected to pay attention and engage respectfully with your classmates.
- If you must use your laptop for note taking, please be aware that you may not use the Internet *for any purpose* during class and you may wish to disable it if you will be otherwise tempted. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in loss of the privilege to use your laptop in class.

Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the Union College Academic Honor Code, which you can access at: www.union.edu/academic_depts/ethics/union/Honor%20Code.php

TOPICS AND READINGS

Introduction

January 3: Who is Plato? Why has the *Republic* remained such an important and influential work?

Republic I

January 5: Read 327a-354c: Is it better to be just or unjust?; Also read *Analyze, Don't Summarize* (Nexus)

Republic II-III

January 10: Read 357a-374e: Is it good to be just or only appear just?

January 12: Read 374e-403c: What sort of education is necessary for a just city? Is censorship justified if it makes people more just?

Republic III-IV

January 17: Read 403c-427c: Why is physical education important in a just city?? What kind of people should rule? What is the role of the rulers?

January 19: Read 427d-445e: How should we define justice? What is a just individual?

Republic V-VI

January 24: Read 449a-474b: How should we organize the just city? Is the aim of the just city to make individuals just or to make the city just? Can there be a just city that consists mostly of unjust individuals? Who should rule the just city?

January 26: 449a-474b Continued
***First paper on Justice and Injustice due by midnight**

January 31: Read 474b-504e: Should philosophers rule the just city? What is a philosopher? Are philosophers just? What makes philosophers ideal rulers? What sort of knowledge does the philosopher possess that makes him/her virtuous?

Republic VI-VII

February 2: Read 504e-520d: How does someone make it out of the cave?

February 7: 504e-520d continued

Republic VII

February 9: Read 521a-541b: How should the guardians of the just city be educated?

Republic VIII-IX

February 14: Read 543a-562a: What is the best form of government for the ideal city? What are the different types of unjust cities? How do they fall short of the just city?
*** Second Paper on The Allegory of the Cave and the Divided Line Due**

February 16: Read 562a-576e: How does tyranny evolve from democracy?

Republic IX

February 21: Read 577a-592b: What is pleasure? How will the just person manage his desires and emotions? If pleasure is not the good, is pleasure bad?
***Meet with me by February 21st to discuss your presentation topic.**

Republic X

February 23: Read 595a-608a: What is wrong with poetry? Why will most the works of the ancient poets be banned from the just city?

February 28: 594-608a continued
***Draft of presentation due**

March 2: Read 608a-621c: What is the point of the Myth of Er?

March 7: Presentation

March 9: Presentation