

Philosophy 418/518
Plato
Winter Quarter 2007

COURSE INFORMATION

Call numbers: 418 = 05648; 518 = 05664
Section number: A01
Time: 3:10 – 5:00 T & Th
Place: 215 Ellis Hall

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Scott Carson
Office: 220D Ellis
Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 T & Th
email: carsond@ohio.edu

Prerequisites. In addition to having taken Philosophy 310 (Ancient Greek Philosophy) or its equivalent and at least three other philosophy courses, each student is expected to be familiar with the rough outlines of at least some contemporary theories of knowledge, metaphysics, and ethics or social/political philosophy. Your experience in these areas need not be great, but it will not do to be learning about, say, utilitarianism, for the first time in this class. Knowledge of either natural deduction or syllogistic logic is also required.

Course Description.

This seminar will be grounded upon a close reading of Plato's *Republic*, one of his greatest works, a dialogue that explores the concept of *dikaïosunê* by a close examination of the moral psychology of the human individual and of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the optimal functioning of humans living in society.

This course will be conducted in a genuine seminar format. This means that there will be no lectures given by the instructor and you cannot use this course as a means of simply filling in the gaps in your knowledge of Plato by sitting passively in class writing down things that other people say. Active participation in the class at every meeting is required of every student, and your grade will reflect your willingness and ability to take part in classroom discussions.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are threefold:

1. First, to develop skill at reading and interpreting extremely difficult texts from the history of philosophy and, in particular, to use this skill to gain detailed knowledge of Plato's metaphysics, epistemology, and ethical theory.
2. Second, to improve critical thinking skills by means of class discussions and the writing of detailed, critical essays on assigned topics.
3. Third, to come to a better understanding of the meaning and significance of problems in contemporary philosophy by coming to understand their historical origins and the motivations behind the arguments involved.

Required texts.

Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
Plato. *The Republic*. Edited by G. R. F. Ferrari; translated by Tom Griffith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Course Requirements.

- (1) **Participation.** The seminar format requires that each student be prepared to participate actively in class discussions. This means that attendance is mandatory, and that all reading and research should be completed prior to the meeting of the seminar. Students who say little or nothing during class meetings will receive no credit for participation even if they attend every class meeting.
- (2) **Presentation.** Each student will make a presentation to the class of material from the secondary literature or from the writings of Plato relevant to the seminar. The purpose of the presentation is to facilitate discussion of issues relevant to the seminar and to prepare the student for the final seminar report
- (3) **Seminar paper.** Each student will write a major seminar paper (roughly 3500-4000 words [10-12 pages] for undergraduates; 4000-5000 words [12-15 pages] for graduate students) on some topic to be agreed upon after consultation with the instructor. A draft of this paper must be complete before Thursday, 1 March 2007. The final draft is due before 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 15 March 2007. It is highly recommended that you begin work on this paper as soon as possible, immediately if at all feasible, and bring drafts to me for help with composition and research as you work.
- (4) **Seminar report.** At the end of the term each student will give a formal presentation of his/her seminar project (the seminar paper). This report ought not to be merely a verbatim reading of the paper itself, though it may be an abbreviated version of it. The report should last approximately 15 minutes, and each student should be prepared to answer questions from the seminar for about 10 minutes following the report (25 minutes total).

Your final grade for the course will be computed on the following basis:

Presentation:	15%
Participation	15%
Seminar paper:	40%
Seminar report:	30%

Grading

A

Outstanding work. No corrections, additions, or editing necessary. For undergraduates: better/different work could not reasonably be expected. For graduate students: publishable.

B

Good work, but needing revision. For undergraduates: further research and writing can improve the paper; the writing style may also need some work. Nothing important has been omitted, but the manner of exposition or argumentation leaves something to be desired. For graduate students: the paper fails to address an important issue or fails to argue in an adequate way, or fails to grasp fully the nature of the problem and its solution.

C

Poor work, but acceptable after substantial revision. For undergraduates: the work shows no promise; the topic may be pedestrian or addressed in an overly casual way; mere summary of other work with little or no analysis; poor writing style; important issues have been overlooked or addressed in an unsatisfactory way. For graduate students: the paper fails to show the level of analysis expected of graduate students. A paper in this category ought not to be submitted for a final grade. Refer to detailed written comments from instructor for guidance in revising the paper.

D

Unacceptable work. For undergraduates: the work is only marginally related to the assignment; only a few points of contact with most of the essential issues; grasp of material is clearly inadequate. For graduate students: the work is unacceptable and must be completely re-done. Refer to the instructor's written comments for guidance.

F

Unacceptable work or work not submitted. A grade of F will be given to any student who fails to complete the assignment in some sense, whether by failing to turn it in or by turning in work that does not sufficiently respond to the actual assignment. The grade of F differs from the grade of D only in that a grade of D acknowledges that the student at least made a bona fides attempt to do the assigned work, though s/he was not successful at doing it.

Plus/minus

A plus or a minus may be appended to an individual assignment, at the instructor's discretion. Refer to the instructor's written comments for the reason. In general a plus indicates that, although the work clearly falls in the category indicated, it is very close to the next higher category and could easily be revised in such a way as to earn a grade in the next higher category. In general a minus indicates that, although the work can be said to fall in the category indicated, it is very close to falling in the next lower category, and substantial revision would be required to secure a higher grade.