

Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 230 A1, Fall Term, 2011
Greek Philosophy: Plato
T & TR 2-3:20 p.m. Ed 106

Instructor: R. Burch

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Purpose: It could be plausibly argued that Plato invented philosophy as we know it, prompting the British philosopher, A.N. Whitehead (co-author of *Principia Mathematica* with Bertrand Russell) to declare that “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” With this assessment in mind, we shall attempt in this course to come to an understanding of Plato’s ‘invention’ by asking of him three interrelated general questions: what is philosophy? who is the philosopher? and how are we to understand the place of the philosopher's word and deed (*logos kai ergon*) in the world? The course will be divided into three sections: The first section will consist of a brief consideration of some pre-Platonic thinkers to provide background and context; the second will consist of a summary discussion of four Platonic texts—the *Apology*, the *Meno*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Phaedo* (some guide questions for each of these readings will be made available on my website); and the third and principal part of the course will consist in a critical reading and discussion of Books I-VII of Plato’s *Republic* with a view to ethical and political, as well as epistemological and metaphysical issues the text raises.

Required Texts:¹

1. Phil 230 A1 Course Pack, \$8.48 (the explication guide & some fragments related to Pythagoras, Anaximander, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Empedocles, Protagoras, Thrasymachus)

¹ **A note on the texts:** We are reading these texts in translation and there is a plethora of translations of Plato’s writings available and no translation is philosophically neutral. By and large I have chosen translations that strive for literalness, often at the expense of English euphony and idiom. If you prefer to use different translations/editions than the ones I have ordered, that is your prerogative. Translations of all of the Plato texts we shall be reading are available for free on-line, but mostly in the very old Benjamin Jowett translations, which I would strongly suggest you avoid. Other on-line translations (e.g., by Lamb) would be acceptable but not ideal. By and large translations by Allen, Griffith, Grube, Hackforth would be serviceable alternatives. In any case, your page referencing should be to the Stephanus numbers. Stephanus numbers, which are given in the margins of scholarly translations, are based on an edition of Plato by Henricus Stephanus 1578, and are now the standard system of reference to Plato’s writings. One further note, the total Amazon.ca on-line cost, before taxes and shipping, of the Plato texts I have assigned is \$53.44. For roughly the same price one could buy *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), ISBN 0-87220-349-2, which is the best single complete collection of Plato’s works in English currently available.

2. Plato and Xenophon, *Apologies*, Mark Kremer (Newburyport, MA.: Focus Library, 2006) ISBN 1-58510-188-5, \$9.64†
3. Plato, *Meno*, trans. George Anastaplo & Lawrence Berns (Newburyport, MA.: Focus Library, 2004) ISBN: 9780941051712. \$9.59†
4. Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Eva Braun, Peter Kalkavage, Eric Salem (Newburyport, MA.: Focus Library, 1998) ISBN 9780941051699. \$9.81†
5. Plato *Protagoras*, trans. Stanley Lombardo & Karen Bell (Hackett Pub Co Inc; New edition edition, 1992) ISBN 978-0872200944 \$8.76†
6. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom, second edition (New York: Basic Books, 1968) ISBN 0465069347. \$15.64†

†Amazon.ca on-line pricing

Supplementary Texts:

Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World, ed. John Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ISBN 9780192801463. \$27.25 (not ordered, but a useful general reference)

F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967) ISBN 0-8147-6552-1. \$22.79 (not ordered, but a useful general reference)

Course materials:

Assignments, guides and other course material hand-outs will be emailed to students on the class list, as well as posted on my website (<http://www.ualberta.ca/~rburch/>) under courses and teaching, then Philosophy 230.

Secondary Sources:

I do not recommend any secondary sources in particular. That is not because I don't think there are any or many that are truly valuable, but because the secondary literature on Plato is vast, and any principle of selection and recommendation on my part would be arbitrary and idiosyncratic. Also, I am proposing that we read the texts themselves in a genuinely 'amateur' way, that is from a genuine love of the study for its own sake and for what we can get out of it as opposed to seeking a 'professional' competence and credential, where knowledge of the current secondary literature would be required.

Pedagogical Principles:

The guiding pedagogical principle for this course is one drawn from Plato via St. Augustine, to wit, that whatever you learn and understand philosophically, you will learn and understand through your own intellect, so that, ultimately, you are your own teacher. "Those who are called students consider by themselves whether what is said is true, that is, by examining the inner truth according to their own capacity. Then therefore do they learn" (Augustine, *De Magistro*, Chap. XIV, ¶145). My

role in this process will be to present you with an extended narrative about the texts we read and the issues they raise, with which you will each have to come to terms on your own. In this process, I shall answer your questions and explain issues so that you can see them more clearly and on occasion debate with you; but in an important sense I do not presume to teach you anything, and least of all to teach you to think. The teaching and learning in this course will be your own accomplishment, for which I shall be merely the midwife and task master. And what you get out of this course will ultimately be a matter of what you actively and critically “appropriate” from it and thus make genuinely your own (*ad-proprius*)

Course Requirements:

1. 3 essays, each consisting of the explication of a single passage from the readings as assigned by the instructor. A detailed guide for writing the explication is provided in the *Course-Pack*, pp. 2-4 and is also available on my website.

	<i>Assigned</i>	<i>word length</i>	<i>date due</i>	<i>worth of final grade</i>	<i>date returned</i>
i.	October 13	±1,500	Oct 25	15%	Nov 1
ii.	Nov 8	±2,100	Nov 24	30%	Dec 1
iii.	Dec 1	±2100	two options	30%	two options
			☞		☞
			Dec 12		Dec 16 (before the final exam, with detailed comments)
			or		or
			Dec 16		Dec 20 (the day of the final exam, without detailed comments)

Students are **very strongly** advised to check and co-ordinate these assignment dates with the assignment dates in their other courses as well as their extra-curriculum schedules. Assignments

tend to pile up a certain times during the term, and especially toward the end, and you need to plan for this well in advance, as extensions *will not be granted* on the grounds that you are too busy in other courses.

2. 1 final 2-hour open-book examination scheduled during the regular examination period (Tuesday December 20th 2-4 p.m.). The examination will be based on the lectures and required readings for the entire course and will be worth 25% of your final grade. In the last week of classes you will be provided with a list 8 questions, 5 of which will appear on the examination of which you will have to answer 3. This examination will not be returned.

Evaluation: grades for this course will be determined on the basis of the merits of the written assignments and the examination with a view to the depth and breadth of understanding they exhibit according to the course level and the nature of the material and the questions beings asked. Although the Faculty has broad distribution norms, grading in this course will not follow a strict distribution requirement. There is no official requirement for class participation and none is factored into the grade; but for the course to be worthwhile regular attendance in class and keeping up with the reading with be crucial.

In determining the grades I use the following rough rubric:

A range: gets everything in the assignment that was asked for in a clear, comprehensive, and well-written way, but has some interesting insight, shows some originality or depth of thought, that makes the paper special, beyond just getting it all right.

A+	4.0	excellent (best work I've seen in recent years at this level)
A	4.0	excellent (best work I've seen this year)
A-	3.7	excellent work but not outstanding

B range: basically does the assignment as asked, accurately and clearly, has pretty much everything right without serious mistakes or omissions.

B+	3.3	good strong work
B	3.0	good, just above average for this level.
B-	2.7	good, just below average for this level. (usually has some issue missed or under-emphasized, though not usually with outright mistakes in argument or interpretation)

C range: usually has some flaws-missed a key point, got some issue wrong, didn't do the assignment in the way that was asked.

C+	2.3	satisfactory (OK, you did the job but probably lacked clarity or proper emphasis)
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C	2.0	satisfactory (could try harder? probably lacked clarity, or had mistakes, or didn't do the assignment as asked)
C-	1.7	satisfactory (but only barely, shows evidence of more serious confusions)

D range: really way in over your head and are not getting it at all. Usually indicates problems in comprehension and writing that go beyond simply dealing with the course material.

D+	1.3	poor
D	1.0	minimal pass
F		Fail

Work Load: I determine the work on the assumption that students will devote on average 8 hours per week per course (which amounts to a 40 hour week for a full course load). That breaks down to roughly 3 hours per week in class time, and 5 hours per week for reading and assignments, etc.

Course Schedule:

Students are **very strongly** advised to begin the required reading as soon as possible and to keep up with it judiciously as the course proceeds. The nature of this course is such that last minute cramming will be of little avail, either for improving your grade or more importantly for getting anything worthwhile out of the course.

Schedule of Readings: Central to the purpose of this course is to learn to read complete philosophical texts actively and critically. Students are very strongly advised to begin the required reading as soon as possible, to make use of the reading guide questions I provide for some dialogues, and to keep up with the reading judiciously as the course continues. If you don't keep up with the reading you are not likely to get very much out of this course. Moreover, the work is such that trying to catch up in the last minute either for assignments or the exam will be of little profit.

Date:

September 8

Topic: Introduction to the Course

Section I: Pre-Platonic Background

September 13

Topic: Pythagoras and the invention of 'philosophy'

Required Reading: Course Pack, pp. 5-6

September 15

Topic: Beginnings of philosophical theorizing (Anaximander & Xenophanes)

Required Reading: Course Pack, pp 7-9

Topic: Heracleitus

Required Reading: Course Pack, pp. 10-16

September 20

Topic: Heracleitus

Required Reading: Course Pack, pp. 10-16

Topic: Parmenides & Zeno

Required Reading: Course Pack pp. 17-21

September 22

Topic: Parmenides & Zeno

Required Reading: Course Pack pp. 17-21

September 27

Topic: prelude to Plato: Empedocles, Protagoras, Thrasymachus

Required Reading: Course Pack pp. 22- 25

Section II: Summary Discussion of Four Platonic texts: The Philosopher's Way of Life.

September 29 & October 4

Topic: Socrates Trial, The Way of the Philosopher in the Polis.

Required Reading: Apologies, pp. 1-28

Supplementary: Apologies, pp. 29- 37

October 4 & 11

Topic: Protagoras

Required Reading: Protagoras (entire)

October 13: first assignment handed out

October 13 & 18

Topic: What is Virtue, and who is Meno?

Required Reading: Meno (entire)

October 20 & 25

Topic: The Afterlife and Immortality

Required Reading: Phaedo (entire)

October 25: first assignment due

Section III: Reading the Republic

We shall read together critically roughly two-thirds of the *Republic*, beginning with the descent into the house of Cephalus/Pluto in Book I, the construction of the just *polis* in ‘speech’ (Bks II-IV), and the founding of the philosopher-*polis* ‘in deed’ (Books V-VII), leading to the famous ‘cave’ allegory of education and non-education in Book VII. I strongly recommend, however, that students try to read the whole of the dialogue as a matter of general education. The schedule I outline below is rather rough. My recommendation is that students try to read roughly 40 Stephanus pages per week.

October 27 *Republic*, Book I

November 1 *Republic*, Book I

November 3 *Republic*, Book II

November 8 *Republic*, Book II

November 8: second assignment handed out

November 9: Last day to withdraw from fall term courses

November 10: Fall break

November 15 *Republic*, Book III

November 17 *Republic*, Book III

November 22 *Republic*, Book IV

November 24 *Republic*, Book V

November 24: second assignment due

November 29 *Republic*, Bks. V & VII

December 1 *Republic*, Book VI

December 1: third assignment handed out

December 6 *Republic* Book VII, 514a - 527.

December 12: third assignment due (first option)

December 16: third assignment due (second option)

December 20: final examination 2-4 p.m. ED 106

Late Assignment Policy & Code of Student Behaviour:

Late Assignments will be accepted without penalty only in the case of documented medical or severe personal problems, brought to the attention of the instructor at least one day in advance of the due date of the assignment. Late assignments will otherwise be penalized .25 grade point per day late on the 4-point scale. Assignments will be considered late if not received by 4:30 p.m. on the day they are due. The 4:30 p.m. cut-off applies to late submissions as well. In determining the late penalty, weekends will count as one day, provided the paper is received by 9:30 a.m. on the

Monday following (or the Tuesday of long-weekends). Otherwise they will count as two days late. Papers not given to the instructor directly are to be turned in to the Philosophy Department Office (ASH 2-40) and are to be stamped and initialed by the secretary with the date and time submitted. (N.B. Unless otherwise arranged, papers left at the Instructor's office in his absence will not be graded.)

N.B. The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offense. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any questions about provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour as they apply in this course, it is your responsibility to ask the instructor for clarification.

Specialized Support & Disability Services

Students who require accommodations in this course owing to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Specialized Support & Disability Services
2-800 Students' Union Building
Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6G 2J7

For general enquiries, contact:

E-mail: ssds.office@uss.ualberta.ca

Telephone: 780 492 3381

Facsimile: 780 248 1665

TTY (deaf callers): 780 492 7269

Videophone (deaf callers): 780 492 7269 or IP 129.128.187.84

Web site: www.ualberta.ca/ssds

(University policy concerning course outlines can be found in § 23.4(2) of the University Calendar).