

Fall 2022: Topics in Ancient Philosophy: Plato's *Republic*
PHIL GR9121
Tuesday 12:10-2pm
Room: 716 Philosophy Hall

1. Course Description

The *Republic* has been criticized for any number of reasons, including its most outrageous claim—that philosophers should rule. It has also been admired for its complex proposals in moral psychology, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology.

Famous texts such as Plato's *Republic* can easily seem to be “staples.” Nevertheless, research on the *Republic* involves many unresolved questions. The seminar is designed as a research experience. It includes three guest speaker sessions, as part of the series Workshop in Ancient & Contemporary Philosophy. It also involves three 1-hour sessions with current PhD students who write dissertations about topics related to the *Republic*. In effect, the seminar brings together established specialists in the field, PhD students writing on the *Republic*, PhD and MA students as well as other graduate students at Columbia who take the class as part of their course work, willing to immerse themselves into in-depth discussion of Plato's philosophy. In the spirit of the Workshop in Ancient & Contemporary Philosophy, the seminar focuses on themes that are related to discussions in contemporary philosophy.

In terms of secondary literature, we study classic and recent publications, as well as work-in-progress. We devote each week to one of the dialogue's ten books. As we approach the so-called “middle books,” which discuss perennial questions in psychology, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology, we slow down and spend a bit more time on especially complex material.

Each week, a short video introduces key topics: [<YouTube playlist: 10 mini lectures>](#).

2. Prerequisites

The *Republic* has ten books. Ideally (though not necessarily), you read two or three books of the *Republic* prior to our first class meeting. Alternatively, you should expect to devote significant time to reading during the first couple of weeks of the semester. Reading Plato is an acquired skill; once you've worked your way through some books, you'll have developed methods that will make it faster and easier to read the remaining books.

The class is designed as an upper-level graduate seminar. Undergraduate students must apply for permission to attend by sending an email to the instructor. Explain your interest in the class and your preparation, which can include prior work in ancient philosophy and/or in other subfields of philosophy. Ancient Greek is not required.

3. Outline of Readings and Topics

Secondary readings are posted on Courseworks. Regarding Plato's *Republic*, you can use the Grube/Reeve Hackett edition or the Reeve Hackett edition. The former is included in the *Complete Works* Hackett edition by Cooper.

Note: Papers suitable for student presentations in green font, workshop sessions in red.

Week 1, 09-06-22: The Project and Structure of the *Republic*

Primary reading: Book I

Secondary reading: Catherine Rowett, *Knowledge and Truth in Plato: Stepping Past the Shadow of Socrates*, OUP 2018, chapter 6 "Discovering what justice is in Plato's *Republic*," pp. 115-125.

Optional secondary readings: Tamer Nawar, "Thrasymachus' Unerring Skill and the Arguments of *Republic* 1" *Phronesis* 63 (4):359-391 (2018).

Week 2, 09-12-22: Book II, Kinds of Goods, and Glaucon's Challenge

Primary reading: Book II

Secondary reading: Merrick Anderson, "What Are the Wages of Justice? Rethinking Plato's Division of Goods," *Phronesis* (2020).

Optional secondary readings: Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, chapter 3; Bernard Williams, "Plato Against the Immoralist," ch. 6 in Williams, *The Sense of the Past*, originally published elsewhere in 1997; CDC Reeve, "Glaucon's Challenge and Thrasymacheanism," *OSAP* 2008; David Sedley, "Platonic Causes," *Phronesis* 43(2) (1998): 114-132; Robert Heinaman, "Plato's Division of Goods in the *Republic*" *Phronesis* 47(4) (2002): 309-335.

Second hour: *Workshop in Ancient & Contemporary Philosophy, Work-in-progress session with Luke Lea, Columbia University: Glaucon's Challenge and Antiphon's On Truth*

Secondary reading: David J. Furley, called "Antiphon's Case Against Justice."

Week 3, 09-20-22: Founding the City

Primary reading: Primary reading: Book III

Secondary reading: Myles Burnyeat, *Culture and Society in Plato's Republic*. Tanner Lectures 1997; Malcolm Schofield, "The Noble Lie," in ed. Ferrari, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, CUP 2005; Alexander Nehamas, "Plato and the Mass Media," in *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 279-99.

Optional secondary readings: Rachel Barney, "Platonic ring-composition and Republic 10" in: Mark L. McPherran (Editor) *Plato's Republic, a Critical Guide*, Cambridge University Press (2010), 47-67; Sarah Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, "What lies ahead," CUP, 2012.

Week 4, 09-27-22: Tripartition and Desiring the Good

Primary reading: Book IV

Secondary reading: John Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Motivation," reprinted in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1998), 118-137; Katja Maria Vogt, "Plato on Hunger and Thirst," *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 20 (2017): 103-119.

Optional secondary readings: John Cooper, "The Psychology of Justice in Plato's Republic," reprinted in: Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 138-151; H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within* (OUP 2006), chapters 1-7, 13-118; Myles Burnyeat, "The Truth of Tripartition," Proceedings of the Aristotelian

Society (2007); Rachel Barney, “What Kind of Theory is the Theory of the Tripartite Soul?” *BACAP* 2016; Gabriela Carone, “Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change his Mind?” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2001): 107–148.

Week 5, 10-04-22: Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy with Catherine Rowett (University of East Anglia). Commentators: Natalie Hannan (Duke University), Qian Cao (Columbia University). Catherine Rowett, “Platonic Method,” in her: *Knowledge and Truth*, OUP 2018.

Week 6, 10-11-21: Knowledge and Belief

Primary reading: Books V-VI

Secondary Readings: Jessica Moss, “Plato’s “Two Worlds” Epistemology,” in: Moss, *Plato’s Epistemology* (OUP 2021); Katja Maria Vogt, “Belief and Investigation in the *Republic*,” in: *Belief and Truth* (OUP 2012).

Optional secondary readings: Jessica Moss, “Plato’s Objects-Based Epistemology,” in Moss, *Plato’s Epistemology* (OUP 2021); Gail Fine.

Week 7, 10-18-22: Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy with Patricia Marechal (Northwestern University). Commentators: Christiana Olfert (Tufts University), Abigail Breuker (Columbia University). Patricia Marechal, “Women, Spirit, and Authority in Plato and Aristotle.” Forthcoming in Brill, Sara and McKeen, Catherine (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on Women and Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Routledge Press.

Week 8, 10-25-22: Mathematics and Dialectic

Primary reading: Books VI-VII

Secondary Reading: Sarah Broadie, *Plato’s Sun-Like Good: Dialectic in Plato’s Republic*, CUP 2021, chapter 1.

Optional secondary readings: Myles Burnyeat, “Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul”; Constance Meinwald, “Who Are the Philotheamones and What Are They Thinking?” *Ancient Philosophy* 37 (1) (2017): 39-57.

Second hour: *Workshop in Ancient & Contemporary Philosophy, Work-in-progress session with Qian Cao, Columbia University: TBD*

Week 9, 11-01-22: Forms

Primary readings: Books V-VII, Book X 595c-597e

Secondary readings: Anna Marmodoro, “Forms as Powers,” chapter 3 in Marmodoro, *Forms and Structure in Plato’s Metaphysics*, OUP 2021; Sarah Broadie, *Plato’s Sun-Like Good*, CUP 2021, chapter 2 “The Form of the Good and Knowledge” and chapter 3 “The Form of the Good and Being.”

Additional secondary readings: Nicholas Denyer, “Sun and Line: the Role of the Good,” in: ed. Ferrari, *Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic* CUP 2005; David Sedley, “Plato and the One-over-Many Principle”, in Chiaradonna & Galluzzo 2013, 113–37; José Edgar González-Varela, “The One over Many Principle of Republic 596a,” *Apeiron* 53(4) (2020): 339–361.

NO CLASS

Week 10, 11-15-22: Desire, Pleasure, Pain

Primary readings: Book IX on kinds of pleasures and the pleasures of reason

Secondary reading: James Warren, *The Pleasures of Reason in Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic Hedonists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014, chapter 2 “Plato on the Pleasures and Pains of Knowing.”

Additional secondary readings: Joachim Aufderheide, “*Republic* 585b–d: Argument and text,” *Classical Quarterly* 68 (1) (2018): 53–68; Mehmet Erginel, “Plato on the Psychology of Pleasure and Pain,” *Phoenix* 65 (2011); Mehmet Erginel, “Plato on Pleasures Mixed with Pains: An Asymmetrical Account,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 56 (2019):73-122.

Week 11, 11-22-22: Psychological and Political Decline

Primary reading: Books VIII-IX

Secondary reading: Dominic Scott, “Irrationality in *Republic* VIII-IX,” chapters 5 and 6 in *Listening to Reason in Plato and Aristotle*, OUP 2020.

Additional secondary readings: Rachana Kamtekar, “The Divided Soul,” chapter 4 in Kamtekar, *Plato’s Moral Psychology*, OUP 2017; Mark A. Johnstone, “Plato on the Enslavement of Reason,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 50 (3) (2020): 382-394; Malcolm Schofield, *Plato: Political philosophy* (Oxford 2006); Iakovos Vasiliou, *Aiming at Virtue in Plato*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, chapter 8.

Week 12, 11-29-22: Imitative Poetry

Primary reading: *Republic* X

Secondary reading: Jessica Moss, “What is Imitative Poetry and Why is it Bad?” In: ed. Ferrari, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, CUP 2005.

Additional reading: Stephen Halliwell, “The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul: Interpreting the Myth of Er,” in *Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, ed Ferrari CUP 2005.

Second hour: *Workshop in Ancient & Contemporary Philosophy, work-in-progress session with Abigail Breuker, Columbia University*: “Plato on Community and Moral Luck: the stories of Gyges and the Cave.”

Week 13, 12-06-21: Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy with Anna Marmodoro (Durham University). Commentators: TBA. Anna Marmodoro, “The Third Bed Problem.”

4. Requirements

For each class, we have a range of readings. Students are expected to come to class having read at least the primary reading(s) carefully. In addition, students should aim to read at least one of the secondary readings. All students should be prepared to contribute to in-class discussion.

Typically, two students (or two teams of two students each) give mini presentations. Students who take the class for E-credit are required to do one of these presentations. Students who take the class for R-credit can opt to do a presentation or not, as they prefer.

— Each presenter (or presenter team) writes a 1-page (or less) handout about the reading, to be circulated one day ahead of class. Please run the handout by me, and I will send it to the class.

- Presentations are 5 minutes, with a 3-4 minute summary of what strikes you as most important and 1-2 minutes where you lay out a question/topic for discussion.
- This task is intended as low-stakes, but also as an opportunity to learn how to present material in a comprehensible and straightforward fashion that helps others engage with it.

A typical class consists of:

- Intro KMV on primary reading and preliminary discussion of primary reading (30 minutes total)
- Student presentation, typically on secondary reading (5 minutes)
- Discussion (20 minutes)
- Student presentation, typically on secondary reading (5 minutes)
- Discussion (20 minutes)
- General discussion (rest of class time)

E-credit writing requirements: Regular contributions to in-class presentations and team work in preparing the presentations. Two 6-page papers or one 12-page paper. For short papers, it is often best to write a response to one of the articles we are reading. For longer papers, you can either respond to one of the assigned articles or address a question that comes up in several readings. Please talk to me about topics you are considering, or send me an email in which you offer a brief sketch of what you have in mind.

Deadline for deciding between paper options: Please let me know by email by Oct 11 whether you plan on writing two short papers or one longer paper.

Due dates for abstract and papers:

Please note that, in addition to deadlines for the submission of completed papers, there are also due dates for abstracts.

- Deadline for 100-word abstracts for short papers: Nov 8 and Dec 6.
- Short paper deadlines: Nov 15 and Dec 15.
- Deadline for 100-word abstract for long paper: Dec 6.
- Deadline for 400-word abstract or outline for long paper: Dec 12.
- Long paper deadline: Dec 15.

R-credit requirements: Careful reading in preparation for class and participation in class. In addition, participation in one short presentation.

5. Academic Integrity and Honor Code

Please consult Columbia University's policies on academic integrity as well as Columbia's honor code:

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/ccschonorcode>

<http://bulletin.columbia.edu/general-studies/undergraduates/academic-policies/academic-integrity-community-standards/>

These policies explain Columbia University's academic regulations and how you can safeguard the integrity of your original work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the details of what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty. You are expected to confirm to these policies in your academic work. It is important that you understand that academic dishonesty can lead to disciplinary action, including failure in the course and suspension, or even expulsion, from the University.

6. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with Disability Services. More information on the Disability Services registration process is available online at <www.health.columbia.edu/ods>. Registered students must present an Accommodation Letter to the professor before an exam or other accommodations can be provided. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion at (212) 854-2388 (Voice/TTY) or by email at <disability@columbia.edu>.