Description

This course provides an examination of some of Plato's most important dialogues, typically including the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, with the aim of grasping the development of Plato's most influential thoughts in ethics and in metaphysics and epistemology. In order to provide both historical understanding and philosophical evaluation, attention will be paid to the context and structure of the dialogues and to the best of recent secondary literature.

In this semester's instantiation of the course, we will study the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. We will cover the full range of philosophical issues in these dialogues. The central question is, How should one live? Closely connected to this are questions concerning whether and, if so, how it is possible to have knowledge about how one should live. More particular questions include: what is the relation between divine commands and ethical requirements? what is philosophy and should one be a philosopher? what is virtue? what is knowledge and how is inquiry possible? what is the distinction between knowledge and true belief? what do experts in, say, medicine or mathematics know? what is there (to be known)? what are causes (such as the experts might cite in their explanations)? what is responsible for life? are human beings immortal? should we fear death? what is justice and should one be just? how would an ideal society (legislative and executive institutions, defense, economy, families) be arranged, and what is the relation between such an ideal and everyday reality? what is the best explanation of psychological phenomena such as mental conflict and weakness of will? what makes good things good? what is the relation between art and truth? and how can art help or hurt our attempt to live well?

Prerequisites

This class is an in-depth survey, designed primarily to give graduate students in philosophy a broad introduction to Plato's philosophical achievement.

The official prerequisites are simple: the course is open to anyone who is a graduate student in philosophy OR who has completed at least one philosophy class at the 300-level (or its equivalent at another university) and at least two philosophy courses overall OR who has the permission of the instructor.

The unofficial prerequisites are more important, and they inform the instructor's permission. Simply put, it will be difficult to keep up with this course if one does not have (1) some comfortable acquaintance with philosophy, (2) some comfortable acquaintance with Plato, and (3) a significant amount of time in which to study the required readings. Any student who has done well in my 300-level survey of ancient philosophy should have the necessary comfort-level with philosophy and with Plato, and other routes to the informal prerequisites are possible. But these requirements should be taken seriously. It is possible to overcome some deficit in one's philosophical background or one's past experience with Plato, but this will require extra reading and re-reading, which will require still more time.
Grades and Requirements

A. Participation. Because the class is designed to provide an advanced survey of Plato, the instructor will do a lot of talking to cover an extensive amount of ground. But he expects to be interrupted with questions at any moment, and will be disappointed if he is not interrupted. Like a fight at a hockey game, discussion could break out at any moment. All students are expected to be ready and willing to participate. (bonus points at instructor's discretion)

B. Writing. There are two options.
   (1) Two short papers (maximum 2500 words each, excluding notes), one due at noon on Friday, 12 October, and the other due at noon on Friday, 14 December. The papers should be submitted as e-mail attachments, and they should include a word count. Some topics will be made available in class, but students are free to write on a topic of their own choosing, so long as that topic was clearly raised in class about the Euthyphro, Apology, Meno, or Phaedo (for the first paper) or Republic (for the second). (100 points each)
   (2) One longer, research paper (maximum 7500 words, excluding notes), due at noon on Friday, 14 December. As a research paper, this is expected to take account of the literature in the field. (200 points)

The second option is available only by petition, and petitions are due by 5 October. If you are interested, express your interest to me in writing by then. (An email suffices. No, you do not have to have a settled topic at that point. But you'd better have some ideas. The second option is especially designed for graduate students in philosophy to work an essay toward a QP.)

C. Exam. There will be a final exam to test for acquaintance with Plato's philosophical achievement. The test will consist of identifying ten of twelve short passages from dialogues assigned in this course. Identifications must explain what is being said, the significance of what is being said to the dialogue, and the broader significance of what is being said to philosophy. The last of these three desiderata requires situating the view expressed in the passage in relation to some philosophical question of enduring interest and in relation to some other answer to the question or some other reasoning for the same answer. (100 points)

The deadlines are firm, and tardiness will be penalized by ten points per twenty-four hours or fraction thereof. An incomplete for additional work on a research paper is available by a written petition that specifies a new deadline, but the standards for papers handed in later will be significantly higher.

It should not be necessary to say, but all work submitted for credit in this class must be the student's own and written for this particular class. If ideas or words are borrowed without attribution from another person or are borrowed from work done for another class, or if there is any other violation of the academic integrity policy printed in the course listings, the student will automatically fail the course and be referred to the committee on academic integrity.
Texts

I have ordered three required texts at Mallinckrodt:

- Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works (Hackett)
- Fine, ed. Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology (Oxford)

Required secondary readings that do not appear in Plato 1 or Plato 2 are available online, most of them as pdf files because they appear in a journal to which Olin has an electronic subscription (through JSTOR or some similar service) or because I have put them on electronic reserve through Olin's E-Res. To access these pdf files, you will need to use a computer on campus, or you will need to use Olin's server as a proxy (for which see http://library.wustl.edu/about/proxy.html). You will also need Adobe Acrobat Reader (a free download from http://www.adobe.com) or some other software for displaying and printing pdf files (e.g., Preview in Mac OS X). To find an article in a journal to which Olin has an electronic subscription, locate the journal in Olin's online catalog, or search from Olin's list of electronic journals. To find the articles that are available on E-Res, navigate to this course's page from http://eres.wustl.edu/, and use the password 'forms' (just the five characters between the inverted commas).

Students who do not read Greek should look at multiple translations of the dialogues for any passage that they discuss in detail in their papers, to ensure that they are not relying on an idiosyncratic translation. The library, used bookstores, and the web are filled with alternative translations. For the Republic, there is a brand new one by C.D.C. Reeve (from Hackett Publishing) that is quite reliable. The newer renderings in the Penguin series are generally good, and the old volume of collected dialogues edited by Hamilton and Cairns is convenient and serviceable. Be very wary of translations by Benjamin Jowett and Robin Waterfield, and note that most of the free translations on the web are unfortunately by Jowett.

Students looking to do additional secondary reading—this will include all those who are writing longer papers—will find references in the required secondary literature, in Plato 1 and Plato 2, and in the relevant articles of the on-line Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Additional references can be discovered via The Philosopher's Index and L'Année Philologique; both of these databases are available electronically through Olin's website. There is also a terrific bibliography of work on the Republic in the new Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic, ed. Ferrari.

Note for Readers of Greek

If there is interest, I will be happy to meet once a week to read (in Greek) and discuss (in English) a short passage of that week's required reading. I will make available photocopies of the selected passage each week.

Readers of Greek should know that there is a new Oxford Classical Texts edition for the Republic (ed. S.R. Slings), as well as the Apology, Euthyphro, and Phaedo (Platonis Opera, ed. Duke et al., vol. 1). For the Meno, we will read the old OCT (Platonis Opera, ed. Burnet, vols. 5 and 2, respectively).
Some Advice about the Reading Assignments

The texts by Plato are more important than the secondary reading, but the latter are useful for two purposes. First, they frame questions and interpretations that the lectures will take up. Second, they offer some models of what the philosophical study of Plato involves.

Often, the assignment for Plato is of the form 'Phaedo, esp. 69e-78b'. That means that you should be acquainted with the entire Phaedo, and you should have studied 69e-78b with great care. The class session will focus on the particular passage, but the instructor will assume familiarity with the whole dialogue to develop readings of the particular passage.

You are strongly encouraged to take notes on the primary text all semester long. Try to outline what is happening in each dialogue by tracing the logical relations among the claims the characters make. There are three reasons to do this. First, it will force you to pay attention as you read, and you need to do that with texts as playful and impressionistic as Plato's dialogues sometimes are. Second, the resulting outlines will greatly facilitate reviewing for the exam and finding relevant texts for your papers. Third, these outlines will come in handy should you find yourself teaching a Platonic dialogue someday. To make these outlines maximally useful, you should do them electronically, and you should revise them after you re-read and after class.

In sum, my advice is to approach these assignments in six stages. (1) Look through the full dialogue to get familiarity. (2) Study the particular passage carefully, and outline it on your computer. (3) Read the assigned secondary reading, and add annotations to your electronic outline. (4) Re-read the particular passage, to assess the reading(s) introduced by the secondary literature and to adjust your outline. (5) Attend class, with a hard-copy of your outline and your texts. (6) Adjust your electronic notes, and re-read any passages for which the lecture called your understanding into question.

Syllabus of Assignments

Aug 29 Introduction

Sept 5 What Socratic Piety is Not
Plato, Euthyphro
P. Geach, "Plato's Euthyphro: An Analysis and Commentary," Monist 50
(1966): 369-382 (E-Res)

Sept 10 What Socratic Piety Is
Plato, Apology
G. Vlastos, "Socratic Piety," in Plato 2, 56-77

Sept 12 Virtue and Happiness
Plato, Meno, esp. 70a-80d
Plato, Euthydemus 278d-282d
T. Irwin, "Socrates the Epicurean?" in Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates,
Sept 17  
*Menos Paradox and Learning as Recollection*

Plato, *Menos*, esp. 80d-100b
D. Scott, "Platonic Recollection," in *Plato 1*, pp. 93-102 (only)

Sept 19  
*Philosophy as an Otherworldly Way of Life*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 57a-69e

Sept 24  
*Introduction to the Forms*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 69e-78b
Plato, *Symposium* 211a-b
Plato, *Theaetetus* 151d-157d

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a29-b8, 1078b11-32, and 1086a32-b13 (E-Res)
A. Nehamas, "Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World," in *Plato 1*, 171-191

Sept 26  
*Forms and Recollection*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 72b-84b
D. Scott, "Platonic Recollection," in *Plato 1*, 93-124

Oct 1  
*Forms and Causes*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 84c-102a

Oct 3  
NO CLASS — Instructor out of town

Oct 5  
**Deadline to petition for longer essay option**

Oct 8  
*Forms and the Soul*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 95a-107b

Oct 10  
*Immortality and the Philosophical Life*

Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 107c-118a
D. Bostock, "The Soul and Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*," in *Plato 2*, 404-424

Oct 12  
**First short essay due at NOON**

Oct 15  
*What Justice is Not*

Plato, *Republic I*
Oct 17  The Challenge
Republic II 357a-367e
N. Denyer, "The Origins of Justice" (part), in SYZETESIS: Studi sull'epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante, vol. 1 (Naples: Gaetano Macchiaroli, 1983), 133-152, esp. 133-144 (E-Res)
T. Irwin, "Republic 2: Questions about Justice," in Plato 2, 164-185

Oct 22  The First City
Republic II 367e-373a

Oct 24  The Second City
Republic II 372c - IV 434d
Taylor, "Plato's Totalitarianism," in Plato 2, 280-296

Oct 29  The Soul
Republic IV 436b-441c
J. Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," in Plato 2, 186-206

Oct 31  An Aborted Response to the Challenge
Republic IV 441c-445e

Nov 5  Women and Children
Republic V 449a-471d
Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism," in Plato 2, 265-279

Nov 7  Philosophers
Republic V 471e - VI 502a
G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5-7" (first part), in Plato 1, 215-225
(optional:) T. Irwin, "The Theory of Forms," in Plato 1, 143-170

Nov 12  What the Philosophers Know
Republic VI 502a - VII 517c
G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5-7" (second part), in Plato 1, 225-246

Nov 14  Why the Philosophers Agree to Rule
Republic VII 517c-521c

Nov 19  Educating Philosophers
Republic VII 521c-541b
Nov 21  NO CLASS — Thanksgiving

Nov 26  The First Proof
Republic VIII 543a - IX 580c

Nov 28  The Second and Third Proofs
Republic IX 580c-592b

Dec 3  The City-Soul Analogy in Retrospect
Republic, esp. II 357a-369a, IV 434d-436b and 441c-444e, VIII-IX
B. Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic," in Plato 2, 255-264

Dec 5  Art and Imitation
Republic X 595a-608b

Dec 10  Faith
Republic X.608c-X.612a

Dec 14  Second short or single long paper due at NOON

TBD  Review Session

TBA  Exam