

7AAN2026 Greek Philosophy I: Plato syllabus – Academic year 2012/13

Basic information

Credits: 20

Module Tutor: Dr Joachim Aufderheide

Office: 706

Consultation time: Wednesdays 12-1

Semester: 1

Lecture time and venue: Thursdays 12:00-14:00, Room tbc

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

This course is designed to give not only an overview of some of the most important topics in Plato's philosophy, but also to raise critical points and to offer different interpretative strategies, thus providing the student with the knowledge and skills required to study Plato independently. By working through two of Plato's most influential works, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, we will cover Plato's Ethics, Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Natural Philosophy.

- Participants are expected to give one short presentation to start off the discussion after the lecture.
- The initial lecture hour, 12:00–13:00, will be shared with students taking 5AANA001 Greek Philosophy II: Plato, but they will otherwise be subject to different requirements.
- Students are encouraged, though not required, to take this module in conjunction with 7AAN2027 Greek Philosophy II: Aristotle and/or 7AAN2031 Greek Philosophy III: Special Topics in the second semester.

Assessment methods and deadlines

- *Formative assessment:* Formative assessment: 2 x 1,500–2,000-word essays, due by end of semester or as otherwise instructed.
- *Summative assessment:* Summative assessment: 1 x 2-hour end of year examination.

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

Week One 04 Oct, Ethics: Why should I be just?

Reading:

primary (p): *Republic* Book I;

secondary (s): R. Barney, 'Socrates' Refutation of Thrasymachus (in G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*);

further (f): *Gorgias* 460a-481b; G. Vlastos, 'Was Polus Refuted?', *American Journal of Philology* (88).

Week Two 11 Oct, Ethics: Why should I be just? (II)

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* II;

(s): T. Irwin, 'Republic 2: Questions about Justice' (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2*); B. Williams, 'Plato against the Immoralist' (in B. Williams/M. Burnyeat, *The Sense of the Past*);

(f): *Gorgias* 481b-492; J. Cooper, 'Socrates and Plato in Plato's *Gorgias*' (in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*).

Week Three 18 Oct, Moral Psychology: Parts of the Soul

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* IV.434-441;

(s): J. Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation' (in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*);

(f): H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within* (Part 1).

Week Four 25 Oct, Ethics: justice in the city and the individual

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* IV.427c-445e;

(s): B. Williams, 'The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's *Republic*' (in G. Fine (ed.) *Plato 2*);

(f): R. Kraut, 'The Defense of Justice in Plato's *Republic*' (in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*).

Week Five 01 Nov, Epistemology: belief vs knowledge

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* V.474b-480a;

(s): G. Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* 5-7' (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 1*);

(f): *Meno* 96d-100b; G. Fine, 'Knowledge and True Belief in the *Meno*' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (27).

READING WEEK – NB FIRST FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE – Sunday 11 November

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings) – continued

Week Six 15 Nov, Metaphysics: the form of the good

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* VI.504d-VII.517c;

(s): G. Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* 5-7' (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 1*); G. Santas 'The Form of the Good in Plato's *Republic*' (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 1*);

(f): T. Penner, 'Forms in the *Republic*' (in G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*).

Week Seven 22 Nov, Meta-Philosophy: how to become a philosopher (and why)

Reading:

(p): *Rep.* V beginning to 471b; VII.517c to the end;

(s): M. Miller, 'Beginning the "Longer Way"' (in G. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*);

(f): M. Burnyeat, 'Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul' (in T. Smiley (ed.), *Mathematics and Necessity: Essays in the History of Philosophy*).

Week Eight 29 Nov, Natural Philosophy: the working of Intellect

Reading

(p): *Timaeus* 27-49;

(s): T. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, Ch. 4;

(f): T. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, Chs. 1-3.

Week Nine 6 Dec, Natural Philosophy: the effects of Necessity

Reading:

(p): *Timaeus* 47-69;

(s): T. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, Chs. 5-6;

(f): S. Broadie, 'The Contents of the Receptacle', *The Modern Schoolman* (80):171-89.

Week Ten 13 Dec, Natural Philosophy: the cooperation of Intellect and Necessity

Reading:

(p): *Timaeus* 69-92;

(s): S. Strange, 'The Double Explanation in the *Timaeus*' (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 1*);

(f): S. Broadie 'Divine and Natural Causation in the *Timaeus*: The Case of Mortal Animals' (in F. Fronterotta (ed.) *La Scienza e le Cause a partire dalla Metafisica di Aristotele*). (I have copies of Broadie's articles)

NB SECOND FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE: Monday December 31

Suggested essay questions

First formative essay: write an essay of 1500 to 2000 words on either a), b), c), or d):

a) Do you find Plato's defence of justice in Republic Book I convincing? Discuss.

or

b) According to Plato the soul has three aspects or parts. Explain the parts and their relation to each other and critically assess the arguments in support of this tripartition.

or

c) Why should you be just? Discuss with reference to *Republic* Books II and IV.

or

d) Explain and discuss the distinctions drawn in *Rep.* V.474-80 between knowledge and true belief.

Second formative essay: write an essay of 1500 to 2000 words on either a), b) c), or d):

a) What role does the form of the good play in relation to the other forms? Answer by reference to Plato's *Republic*.

or

b) All human beings are mortal - but they also have an immortal part. Does Plato in the *Timaeus* give a plausible account of the relationship between the human body and the soul?

or

c) Why does the universe (or the cosmos) exist? Examine critically the answer given by Plato in the *Timaeus*.

or

d) What is the receptacle in the *Timaeus* and what does it do? Explain and discuss.

Suggested additional readings

In general, reading more Plato is the best way to improve one's understanding of Plato. Although the Hackett volume *Plato: complete works*, edited by John Cooper, is very handy and worth having, it leaves out the often substantial introductions which the translators add to the text. D. Zeyl's introduction to the *Timaeus*, for example, is a helpful overview and worth reading. These introductions also contain useful hints for secondary literature.

There is much written on the *Republic*. Both

G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* and

G. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*

contain a number of good articles covering almost all aspects of the *Republic*. Both are a good starting point for further research.

J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* is an accessible and interesting introduction (though slightly dated).

For those reading Greek, the revised OCT text by Slings should be the first choice.

A helpful commentary on the Greek is that of

J. Adams *The Republic of Plato, Edited with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Appendices* (2 vols).

There are fewer monographs on the *Timaeus*. In addition to Johansen's very helpful book, you will be able to use S. Broadie's fantastic study of the dialogue:

S. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*

More dated but still useful books are

G. Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* and

F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*.

Those reading Greek will be able to benefit from

A.E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*.

Useful collections of articles are

R. Mohr, B. Sattler (eds.), *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today : Plato's Timaeus Today* and

T. Calvo and L. Brisson (eds.) *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias : proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum : selected papers*.