5AANA001 Greek Philosophy II: Plato
Syllabus – Academic year 2014/15

Basic information

Credits: 15
Module Tutor: Raphael Woolf
Office: room 712, Philosophy Building
Consultation time:
Semester: 1
Lecture time and venue*: Fridays, 11-12; Strand K4U.12

*Please note that tutorial times and venues will be organised independently with your teaching tutor

Module description (plus teaching arrangements, aims and objectives)

The course is designed to give not only an overview over some of the most important topics in Plato’s philosophy, but also to raise critical points and offer different interpretative strategies, thus providing the student with the knowledge and skills required to study Plato independently. The course will be arranged around one of the most important questions in Plato’s career, ‘Why should I be just?’. By working through two of Plato’s works centrally devoted to this topic, the Gorgias and the Republic, we will cover aspects of Plato’s Ethics, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Political Philosophy and Moral Psychology. While the module will build on the Greek Philosophy I module for students who have taken it, it does not presuppose that module and can be taken without prerequisite.

Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment**: 2 essays X 1,500 words each - for formative deadlines see lecture schedule below
- **Summative assessment**: 2 essays X 2,000 words each – summative deadline **12:00 (NOON) on Thursday 14 May 2015**

NB Please note that for semester I-only Study Abroad students, assessment requirements may vary.
Outline of lecture topics (plus readings)

(* = available electronically through the library)

**Week One** Sep 26: Justice and Power

Reading:
- primary (p): *Gorgias* 447a-461b
- secondary (s): J. Doyle, ‘Socrates and Gorgias’, *Phronesis* 55 (2010)*
- further (f) J. Cooper, ‘Socrates and Plato in Plato’s *Gorgias*’, in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*

**Week Two** Oct 3: Justice and Shame

Reading:
- (p): *Gorgias* 461b-481b

**Week Three** Oct 10: The Case for Immoralism – **NB lecture as normal, but no seminars**

Reading:
- (p): *Gorgias* 481-499b

**Week Four** Oct 17: **NB No lecture, seminars as normal on Week Three material**

**Week Five** Oct 24: Why should I be just?

Reading:
- (p): *Republic* Book II;
- (s): T. Irwin, ‘Republic 2: Questions about Justice’ (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2*);

READING WEEK – **NB FIRST FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE FRIDAY OCTOBER 31**

**Week Six** Nov 7 Parts of the Soul

Reading:
- (p): *Rep. IV.434-441*;
- (s): J. Cooper, ‘Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation’ *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1 (1984)*; also in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*;

**Week Seven** Nov 14: Justice in the city and in the soul

Reading:
- (p): *Rep. IV.427c-445e*;
- (s): G. Vlastos, Justice and Happiness in the *Republic* in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*
Outline of lecture topics (plus readings) – continued

**Week Eight** Nov 21: What knowledge is
Reading:
(p): Rep. V.473b-480a
(s): G. Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5', Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 60 (1978); also in G. Fine, Plato on Knowledge and Forms
(f): F. Gonzalez, 'Propositions or Obects? A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5', Phronesis (1996)*

**Week Nine** Nov 28: Attaining the Good: Sun and Line
(p): Rep. VI.504d-511e;
(s): G. Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5-7', in S. Everson (ed), Epistemology; also in G. Fine (ed.), Plato 1; and in G. Fine, Plato on Knowledge and Forms;

**Week Ten** Dec 5: The Cave: Escape and Return
Reading:
(p): Rep. VII
(s): R. Kraut, 'Return to the Cave' in G. Fine (ed.) Plato 2

**Week Eleven** – NB Monday Dec 8 at 1pm in Room K2.31: Justice and Pleasure
Reading:
(p): Rep. IX
(s) D. Wolfsdorf, Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy, Ch 5,
(f) D Russell, Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life Ch 4*

NB SECOND FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE: FRIDAY DECEMBER 12
Essay questions

First essay:
  a) Does Socrates refute Gorgias?
  b) Does Socrates refute Polus?
  c) What, if anything, is wrong with Callicles' conception of justice?
  d) How convincing is the case against justice in Republic Book II?

Second essay:
  a) Does Socrates make a good case that the soul has three parts?
  b) Does the theory of the tripartite soul give us good reason to be just?
  c) Explain and discuss the distinctions drawn in Rep. V.474-80 between knowledge and belief.
  d) Explain and critically assess the role of the Form of Good
  e) 'The philosopher escapes from the Cave only to be compelled to return’. Discuss
  f) Is the philosopher’s life the most pleasant? Discuss with reference to Republic IX
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.

For the *Gorgias*, a good translation and commentary is:
D. Zeyl’s translation of the *Gorgias* in the Hackett series is also good

On the historical Gorgias and the rhetorical background see:
R. Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric*

Two good translations of the *Republic* are:
G. Grube/C. Reeve, *Plato, Republic* (Hackett)
G. Ferrai/T. Griffith, *Plato the Republic* (CUP)

Two useful collections of articles on the *Republic* are:
G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato’s Republic*
G. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*

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