5AANA001 Greek Philosophy II: Plato
Syllabus – Academic year 2016/17

Basic information

*Credits*: 15
*Module Tutor*: Raphael Woolf
*Office*: room 712, Philosophy Building
*Consultation time*: Wed 12-1 and Thurs 1-2
*Semester*: 1
*Lecture time and venue*: Thursdays 12-1, K1.28

*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**: 1 essay X 2,000 words each – formative deadline **Monday 7th November 2016** at 16:00.
- **Summative assessment**: 2 essays X 2,000 words each – summative deadline **Wednesday 18th January 2017** at 16:00.
Outline of lecture topics (plus readings)

(* = available electronically through the library)

**Week One** (Sep 29): 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 6): Justice and Shame
Reading:
(p): *Gorgias* 461b-481b
http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/20065/Shame,_Pleasure_and_the_Divided_Soul.pdf

**Week Three** (Oct 13): The Case for Immoralism
Reading:
(p): *Gorgias* 481b-499b

**Week Four** (Oct 20): Why should I be just?
Reading:
(p): *Republic* Book II, 357a-383c;
(s): T. Irwin, ‘Republic 2: Questions about Justice’ (in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2*);

**Week Five** (Oct 27): Parts of the Soul
Reading:
(p): *Rep. IV*, 434d-441c;
(s): J. Cooper, ‘Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation’ *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1 (1984)*; also in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*;

**READING WEEK**

**Week Six** (Nov 10): Justice in the city and in the soul
Reading:
(s): G. Vlastos, Justice and Happiness in the *Republic* in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*
Outline of lecture topics (plus readings) – continued

Week Seven (Nov 17): What knowledge is (and is not)
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 Objects? A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in Republic 5', Phronesis (1996)*

Week Eight (Nov 24): 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 Nine (Dec 1): The Cave: Escape and Return
Reading:
(p): Rep. VII, 514a-541b
(s): R. Kraut, 'Return to the Cave' in G. Fine (ed.) Plato 2

Week Ten (Dec 8): Justice and Pleasure
Reading:
(p): Rep. IX, 571a-592b
(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
Essay questions

You must choose one essay question from the ‘Formative essay’ section for your formative essay; one essay question from the ‘First summative essay’ section for your first summative essay; and one essay question from the ‘Second summative essay’ section for your second summative essay. The formative essay does not carry credit; its purpose is to give you practice at writing essays on Plato. The two summative essays carry all the credit for the module (50% each).

Formative essay:
 a) Does Socrates refute Gorgias?

 b) Does Socrates refute Polus?

 c) What, if anything, is wrong with Callicles’ conception of justice?

First summative essay:
 a) How convincing is the case against justice in Republic Book II?

 b) Does Socrates succeed in showing that reason and appetite are separate parts of the soul?

 c) Explain and assess the role of the ’spirited’ part of the soul in Plato’s moral psychology

 d) Does the theory of the tripartite soul give us good reason to be just?

Second summative essay:
 a) Does Socrates offer a convincing case in Rep. V.474-80 for the distinction between knowledge and belief?

 b) Explain and critically assess the role of the Form of Good

 c) ‘The philosopher escapes from the Cave only to be compelled to return’. Discuss

 d) Is the philosopher’s life the most pleasant? Discuss with reference to Republic IX
Recommended translations and additional readings

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)

In general, reading more Plato is the best way to improve one’s understanding of Plato. The Hackett volume *Plato: complete works*, edited by John Cooper, is very handy and worth having.

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