

Ancient Philosophy

PHI 271 D— Fall 2017

Instructor: Felipe G. A. Moreira

Room: Memorial 217

Time: Monday-Wednesday-Friday / 11:15 AM - 12:05 PM

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Office Hours: After class at Memorial 217 and by appointment

Website: Blackboard (Let me know as soon as possible if you cannot access it).

Class Description

What is justice? Is justice better than injustice? What is a just political community (city)? What is a just man? What is there? What grounds what? How can we know what there is? How can we know what grounds what? How should we live? In which city should we live? In discussing these and other questions, this class gives an overview of Ancient Philosophy, up to Plato. The class has two sections. First, we will deal with Socrates's opponents —the ordinary Greek man; the pre-Socratics (mainly, Heraclitus and Parmenides); and the Sophists (mainly, Protagoras). Second, in spelling out Socrates's responses to these opponents, we will approach Plato's *Republic*. Throughout the class, contemporary digressions will be made. This will serve to connect the Greeks with contemporary matters, such as Trump's worldview, terrorism, racism, feminism, pornography and depression.

Class Goals

To provide an overview of Ancient philosophy up to Plato

To discuss in some detail the aforementioned questions

To draw connections between the Greeks and us

To indicate how the Greeks can help us to deal with some of our contemporary problems

To teach how to read non-philosophical texts in a philosophical way

To teach how to read philosophical texts in a political way

To give students philosophical tools so that they start to articulate philosophical works of their own

Schedule

P.S₁: Come to class having read the text for that date

P.S₂: I reserve the right to make changes to topics and dates of reading assignments

P.S₃: Although a Pdf version is available on Blackboard, I strongly advise you to acquire a hard copy of **Plato's *The Republic of Plato* (2nd edition), trans., Allan Bloom. NY: Basic Books, 1991**

P.S₅: All readings mentioned in what follows are available on Blackboard

Introduction

August 21: Outline of the Class

Primary Reading (P): Syllabus

1. Socrates's Opponents

August 23, 25 and 28: 1st Contemporary Digression — Donald Trump's Worldview

P: Donald Trump's *The Art of the Deal* (chapter 2)

August 30, September 1 and 6: Greek Common Sense

P: Homer's *Iliad* (*only the first 8 verses*), and Homer's *Odyssey* (*only the first 12 verses*)

Secondary Reading (S): Melchert's "Before Philosophy: Myth in Hesiod and Homer"

September 4: No Class

September 8, 11 and 13: 2nd Contemporary Digression — Was Socrates a terrorist?

P: Osama Bin Laden's "To the Americans"

P: George W. Bush's "September 20th, 2001 Speech"

September 15, 18 and 20: The Pre-Socratics: Heraclitus vs. Parmenides

P: Watch *The Matrix*

P: Heraclitus's "Fragments" (read as many as you can / see page 27)

P: Parmenides's "Fragments" (read as many as you can / see page 45)

S: Melchert's "Philosophy Before Socrates" (*recommended focus*: parts on Heraclitus and Parmenides)

S: Barnes's "The Pre-Socratic Philosophers"

S: Heidegger's and Fink's "Heraclitus Seminar 1966 / 67"

September 22, 25 and 27: The Sophists: Protagoras vs. Socrates

P: Watch *American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson*

P: Three Fragments by Protagoras

P: Plato's "Protagoras" (see page 746 / *recommended focus*: 309a-329d)

S: Taylor's and Lee's "Sophists"

September 29, October 2 and 4: 3rd Contemporary Digression — Was Socrates a racist?

P: Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream speech — August 28th, 1963"

P: Malcolm X's "Oxford Union Debate — December 3rd, 1964"

S: Gregory Vlastos's "Does Slavery Exist in Plato's Republic?"

2. Plato's *Republic*

October 4 and 6: Overview of *The Republic* / What is justice?

P: Book I (*recommended focus*: 331c-d; 332d; 334e; 335e; 338c-339b; 346e)

S: Vaughn's "Plato: The Really Real"

S: Melchert's "Plato's Knowing the Real and the Good"

October 9: Is justice better than injustice?

P: Book II (*recommended focus*: 362a; 364a; 370b; 379a- 383c)

October 11: How are men to be educated?

P: Book III (*recommended focus*: 386a-392c; 403e; 414b-415c), and Book IX's 581c to 582b

Fall Recess: October 13-15

October 16 and 18: What are a just city and a just man?

P: Book IV (*recommended focus*: 430e-436b; 445a), and Book V (*recommended focus*: 473b)

October 20 and 23: What about women, children and foreigners?

P: Book V (*recommended focus*: 453c-456b; 459e-461c; 469b-471c)

S: Julia Annas's "Plato's Republic and Feminism"

October 25, 27 and 30: 4th Contemporary Digression — Was Socrates a feminist?

P: Linda Lovelace's *Ordeal* (excerpt)

P: Oriana Small's *Girlvert: A Porno Memoir* (excerpt)

S: Catherine MacKinnon's "Pornography as Trafficking"

S: Gayle Rubin's "Misguided, Dangerous and Wrong: an Analysis of Anti-pornography politics"

November 1: Why should philosopher-kings rule?

P: Book V (*recommended focus*: 477a-480a) and Book VI (*recommended focus*: 509d-511d; 506d)

November 3, 6 and 8: What do philosopher-kings know? (*Allegory of the cave*)

P: Book VII (*recommended focus*: 514a-517d)

November 10: What are the unjust cities and men?

P: Book VIII (*recommended focus*: 543c-d), and Book IX (*recommended focus*: 580a-b; 584b-c)

November 13, 15 and 17: 5th Contemporary Digression — Are tyrants winners or losers?

P: Kurt Cobain's *Suicide Letter*

P: Eric Harris's *Diary*

P: Dylan Klebold's *Diary*

Thanksgiving: November 18-26

November 27: What are the happiest city and man?

P: Book IX (*recommended focus*: 573c; 576e; 578a; 587b; 591a)

November 29: Why are poets to be banned from the just city?

P: Book X (*recommended focus*: 595a-607a)

Conclusion

December 1: Socrates's opponents revenge?

P: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Book I)

December 4: Review of the class

Requirements

Participation Points: 20%. Students should give valuable contribution to class discussions. Extra-credit will be given for those who constantly do so. Students who often miss classes and / or disrespect the rules stated under class behavior should expect to miss participation points

Take Home Assignments Points: 25 %. Practically every week, students will be required to submit one or two paragraphs about the primary readings. These assignments will be worthy 1% to 3% each. They should be submitted in hard copies at the beginning of the class they are due

Papers: 55 %. All drafts and papers should be submitted on Blackboard. Drafts must have **at least 500 words**. Papers must have **at least 1500 words**. **If you want to earn writing credits for this class, you should submit both drafts.** If you do not need writing credits, I still recommend you to submit a draft. I will comment on your drafts, and you are expected to revise them in accordance with my comments before submitting your papers. The due dates are:

1st Draft. Due Date: **September 22nd**

1st Paper: **25%**. Due Date: **October 4th**

2nd Draft. Due Date: **November 17th**

2nd Paper: **30%**. Due Date: **December 4th**

Mental Disorder

In case you have a mental disorder (e.g., depression, anxiety, etc), you should let me know **in private by the end of the first week of class and provide proper medical documentation that attests to your condition.** Depending on your case, an alternative evaluation might be given. **This opportunity will not be given to students who have a mental disorder, but only approach me late in the semester (e.g., in November or even only after the end of classes).**

Grading

There will be no curve, and the following grading scale will apply: F: 0-59% D-: 60-62% D: 63-66% D+: 67-69% C-: 70-72% C: 73-76% C+: 77-79% B-: 80-82% B: 83-86% B+: 87-89% A-: 90-92% A: 93-100% A+: **I may give an A+ to the best student in the class; someone who besides achieving an A score, writes the most original paper of the class.**

Late assignments

Make every attempt to complete your work by the due date. If you see that you cannot complete an assignment on time, please notify me **before the deadline.** The only accepted excuses are: (i) illness for which you have a doctor's note, (ii) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time an assignment is due, or (iii) death or family crisis, with proper documentation provided.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. All work must be your own. Quotations from other sources must be acknowledged. Close and extensive paraphrasing should not be used. You may and are encouraged to talk with others and discuss the material with them in preparing to write your own work. Yet, the finished product should be clearly attributable to you and you alone. See the *University of Miami Honor Code* for more information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism — and how it might be dealt with suspension from the University. Moreover, **note that Blackboard's safe assignment makes it very easy for teachers to identify plagiarism.**

Attendance

I will allow you **five** unexcused absences. **After that, you will lose 1% of your final grade per absence. If you have more than 50% absences, you will fail the course.** The only accepted excuses for missing a class are the following: (i) illness for which you have a doctor's note, (ii) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time an assignment is due, (iii) death or family crisis, with proper documentation provided; or (iv) religious holiday. The policy of the university regarding religious holidays is that students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any classes they will have to miss owing to a religious holiday. Otherwise, such absences will count as unexcused. Moreover, **it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet every class.**

Class Behavior

I advise you to bring the readings to class, but this is not mandatory. **Here are some rules. Do not talk with other students regarding matters not related to the class. Do not sleep in class. Do not arrive late. Do not leave the class before its end with no apparent justification. Do not use cell phones or other electronic equipment (tablets, computers, etc.) in class.**