

# Philosophy 401 Plato — Provisional Syllabus

Gregory Salmieri

Fall, 2019

*This is a provisional syllabus. It is meant to give the reader an idea of the subject matter of the course and of the amount and sorts of work involved. However, the precise readings and assignments, and the dates and weights of these assignments are all subject to change. A final syllabus will be provided at the beginning of the term.*

## Course Description

Plato's *Republic* is arguably the most influential text in the history of philosophy. Stunning in its originality, breadth, and composition, it steaks out bold and tightly interrelated positions in such diverse fields as: metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, philosophy of education, political theory and aesthetics. We will read the dialogue closely, making frequent reference to some of the secondary literature and to related works by Plato. Throughout, attention will be paid to questions of how to interpret philosophical texts (and how to assess competing interpretations), but we will also take time to debate the merits of many of the positions that are advocated in the dialogue (or that are attributed to Plato by various interpreters).

## Basic course and instructor information

Course: Phil 401: Plato

Meeting times: Mondays and Wednesday 3:20–4:40 PM

Location: [SEC-211](#)

Course Number: 01:730:401:01

Index Number: 30131

Credits: 3

Required texts:

- Plato, *Republic*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. Hackett: 2004.
- Plato, *Republic*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford: 2008.
- Plato, *Complete Works*. Edited by John Cooper. Hackett: 1997
- *Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*. Edited by Gerasimos Santas. Wiley: 2005.
- Reeve, C. D. D., *Philosopher Kings*. Hackett: 2006.

Instructor: Gregory Salmieri

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Phone: 412-576-2990

Office Hours: **TBA**, location **TBA**

## Assignments and Grading

Local Discussion Prompts (20%): On three occasions over the course of the semester you will be expected to write a 200–400-word document that raises questions to prompt discussion of the readings assigned for a given class session. The document should reflect a careful reading of the primary sources assigned for the class session, and of relevant assigned secondary sources. It should also show a cognizance of the material covered in previous class sessions. The purpose of the prompt is to raise questions informed by these readings that you think merit discussion in class. These questions can concern issues of Plato interpretation or issues of evaluating his theses or arguments. A good prompt document will typically raise a single question or a few related questions, and will set up these questions by short summary of relevant points from the primary and/or secondary literature. For example, a prompt might summarize competing interpretations of a passage as a means to raising the question of how the passage is to be understood, or it might summarize an argument from Plato and raise objections to or questions about that argument. The document should be posted to the class discussion forum by noon on the day prior to the relevant class session. You may be asked to elaborate on your prompt or to answer questions about the relevant readings in the relevant class session (and so it is vital that you be present for that session). In such cases, the grade for the prompt will reflect not only the written document but your preparation and engagement with the material as demonstrated in the discussion. Each of these prompts will count for 5% of your semester average. On the first day of class, we will determine the days on which each student's first three prompts will be due. The remaining prompt will be due in the last quarter of the semester, and its due date will be determined shortly before the beginning of that quarter.

Global Discussion Prompts (20%): At two points during the semester you will be expected to submit a 400–600-word document that raises questions based on your engagement with the class material up to the point when the prompt is due. These documents will, of course, focus on specific passages or groups of passages, but they should do so in a way that shows a cognizance of all material assigned for the course and all the class discussions, and that shows reflection on the relations between material covered in different class sessions. In style these documents will be much like the local discussion prompts, and they will be assessed in the same manner. We will use the prompts to begin conversations on the class forum and to set up discussions for sessions in the last few weeks of the course, by which time we will have worked our way through the whole of the *Republic*. The prompts may also serve as topics for term papers.

Class Minutes (8%): On four occasions during each semester, you will be responsible for taking minutes on a class session and posting them to the class forum. The minutes should serve as a record of key points made in the class, which you and your classmates can refer to when writing papers (or later prompts). Each of these minutes-taking assignments will count for 2% of your semester average. On the first day of class, we will determine the days on which each student's first three minutes-taking assignments will be due. The remaining assignment will be due in the last quarter of the semester, and its due date will be determined

shortly before the beginning of that quarter. You will not be asked to take minutes on a session where your own prompt forms part of the basis for the discussion. Minutes should be posted to the class forum by noon on the day following the class.

**Forum participation (12%):** You will be graded on your participation in online discussion. Participation will be graded on the degree to which it reflects sustained engagement across the semester with the course materials and the extent to which it contributes to the intellectual environment of the class. Thus, both the quality and quantity of the posts will be considered, and so will the distribution of the posts across the semester. (A flurry of posts during the last days of class will count less than will the same number of equally good posts spread more evenly across the semester.) By the quality of the posts, I mean how clearly written they are, how well reasoned, and how relevant to the subject matter of the course. Because a single excellent post can be worth as much as many mediocre ones, it is difficult to specify a formula for excelling in this part of the course, but I suggest writing at least one post every week. Any student who does this will receive at least a B for this component of the grade, provided that each post raises some new point or question (not previously made by another student in class or on the forum) that is relevant to the class. It is possible however, to receive a higher grade than this by writing fewer posts, if the posts are especially good. If at any point you are concerned about this component of your grade, please email me and I will give you an estimate of where you stand. Prompt posts and session minutes, though posted to the forum, are graded separately and so do not count towards the forum participation grade. Typical posts will respond to an issue raised in one of the prompts or follow up on something lingering from class discussion.

**Class attendance and in-class participation:** Attendance and classroom participation will not count directly towards your grade; however, you are responsible for knowing what was discussed in class, and so will need to attend regularly to do well on the assignments and in the forum. Moreover, participating actively in classroom discussion aids one's understanding of the material, and usually puts one in a position to write better papers and forum posts, so I strongly encourage students to participate, and I occasionally award extra credit points for extraordinary participation.

**Term paper (40%):** You will be responsible for submitting a term-paper of 3,000–5,000 words at the end of the semester. The paper should cover an issue of the sort raised by the global prompts and may (but need not) be based on one of the prompts that you or your classmates have written. The paper should show sustained engagement with the material, and cognizance of all relevant points covered in the course (as reflected on the forum and in the session minutes).

**A general point on grading philosophical writing:** Most of the issues we will discuss in class are controversial, and people who have studied them for years have different opinions. This does not mean that the questions do not have correct answers, but it does mean that it's not *obvious* which are correct, and that intelligent and well-informed people can take different positions. When grading your writing on such issues, I will not consider whether I think the

positions you take are correct. Instead I will focus on the extent to which your writing (1) addresses the issues specified in the prompt, (2) shows an understanding of the positions covered in class, (3) is well reasoned, and (4) is clearly written. Good reasoning and clear writing require using words and grammatical constructions with care to articulate precise thoughts. In assessing the quality of your writing, I will be focused on this rather than on considerations such as flair or complexity of grammar or vocabulary. I will say more about the specific standards for specific assignments as relevant over the course of the term. If at any point, you find the standards unclear, please ask.

### **Academic Integrity and Citation Policies**

You are required to abide by the University's [academic integrity policy](#) in all your work for this course—including in your papers and your posts for the web forums. This means always being clear when the ideas you are presenting are your own and when you have gotten them from other people. In papers ideas taken from others should be cited to the specific source. There is no need to provide bibliographic information when citing sources that were assigned in class, but please do provide it, if you cite any other sources. In forum posts and initial thoughts assignments, there is no need for formal citations, but you must still take care not to present other people's ideas as your own. If you got an idea from someone else, say as much. If you remember the specific source of the idea, name it, but if you don't remember, it is fine to something like: "I once read somewhere that..."

Suspected cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled in accordance the University's [disciplinary procedure](#).

If you have any confusion about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, the university has a helpful compilation of [online resources](#). If you have any further questions, please ask.

### **Dealing with sensitive issues**

Philosophy deals with issues that are very controversial, and it sometimes requires us to think critically about ideas deeply influence the way we lead our lives, that form part of our personal identities, and that factor into the way we evaluate ourselves and others. This is an aspect of the field that I plan to highlight in the class. Thinking critically about such issues often makes us uncomfortable, and if you make it through the whole semester without ever feeling at all uncomfortable about any of your ideas, then the course hasn't succeeded in its aim. The course should not, however, be distressing; and I will try to ensure that challenging ideas are always presented and discussed in a constructive and sensitive manner. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that the conversation will become distressing to some students—especially students whose life experiences are very different from my own, and whose contexts I may not understand. So, if you find any aspect of the course environment distressing or unwelcoming (as opposed to merely challenging), or if you fear that it might

become so, please let me know, and I will make every effort to accommodate you. Similarly, please feel free to exit the classroom at any time, if you find the conversation taking a distressing turn.

Philosophical discussions can occasionally raise sensitive, personal issues that are best discussed with someone other than one's professor. Should you find yourself in this situation, a list of resources provided by the University can be found in the next section of this syllabus.

## **Student-Wellness Services**

Just In Case Web App: <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Contact information: (848) 932-7884; 7 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; [rhscaps.rutgers.edu](http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu).

### Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Contact information: (848) 932-1181; 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; [vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu).

### Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Contact information: (848) 445-6800; Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854; [ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu).

## Scarlet Listeners

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

Contact information: (732) 247-5555; [www.scarletlisteners.com](http://www.scarletlisteners.com).

## **Provisional Schedule**

This provisional schedule lists topics and readings for each class section, and approximate due dates for assignments. However, we are unlikely to keep to this schedule exactly. Always consult the class calendar for up-to-date information on what is due when and on what to read for each session

9/4 Due: Initial Survey

9/4 Session 1: Introduction to the Class

- Course Syllabus

9/9 Session 2: Initial accounts of Justice

- Plato, *Republic* I 327a-336a
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* I.1–3

9/11 Session 3: Dialogue with Thrasymachus

- Plato, *Republic* I 336b-354c
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* I.4–7
- Barney, “Socrates’ Refutation of Thrasymachus”

9/16 Session 4: Glaucon’s Challenge and the Project of the *Republic*

- Plato, *Republic* II 357a-360d
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* I.8–13
- Shields, “Plato’s Challenge: the Case against Justice in *Republic* II”

9/18 Session 5: Founding the Ideal City

- Plato, *Republic* II 368e-377a
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 4.1–4

9/23 Session 6: Education and Censorship

- Plato, *Republic* II-III 377a-412b
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 4.5–6

9/25 Session 7: The City and its Guardians

- Plato, *Republic* III-IV 414b-427e

- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 4.7–10
- 9/30 Session 8: The Tripartite Soul and its the Virtues
- Plato, *Republic* IV 427a-445e
  - Lorenz, “The Analysis of the Soul in Plato’s *Republic*”
  - Anagnostopoulos, “The Divided Soul and Desire for the Good in Plato’s *Republic*”
- 10/2 Session 9: The Tripartite Soul (continued)
- Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–257
  - Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 3.1–10
- 10/5 First Global Prompt Due
- 10/7 Session 10: Some Controversies Surrounding the City
- Plato, *Republic* V 449a-475e
  - Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 4.11–14
- 10/9 Session 11: Metaphysics and Epistemology
- Plato, *Republic* V 475e-480a
  - Plato, *Cratylus* 439d–440a
  - Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A.6
  - Penner, “The Forms in the *Republic*”
- 10/14 Session 12: Epistemology in some Earlier Dialogues
- Plato, *Meno* 80a–87d
  - Plato, *Phaedo* 64a–70c, 72e–77a, 96a–105c
- 10/16 Session 13: The Nature of a Philosopher
- Plato, *Republic* VI 484a-502c
  - Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 2.1–4
- 10/21 Session 14: The Analogies of the Sun and the Line
- Plato, *Republic* VI 502c-511e
  - Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 2.6–13
- 10/23 Session 15: The Cave
- Plato, *Republic* VII 514a-521b
  - Plato, *Symposium* 201d–212b
  - Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 2.5
- 10/28 Session 16: The higher levels of the Guardians’ Study

- Plato, *Republic* VII 521-541a
- Ferejohn, “Knowledge, Recollection, and the Forms in Republic VII”
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 2.12–15

10/30 Session 17: The Degenerate Cities and Souls

- Plato, *Republic* VIII 543a-569c
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 2.1–4

11/4 Session 18: The Soul of a Tyrant

- Plato, *Republic* IX 571a-587b

11/6 Session 19: Why the Just man is Happier than the Unjust

- Plato, *Republic* IX 578c-587b
- Reeve, *Philosopher Kings* 5.1–5
- Singpurwalla, “Plato’s Defense of Justice in the *Republic*”

11/9 Second Global Prompt Due

11/11 Session 20: Poetry

- Plato, *Republic* X 595a-608b
- Lear, GR. Interview on *Elucidations*.

11/13 Session 21: The Rewards of Justice & Concluding Myth

- Plato, *Republic* X 608c-621d
- Lear, J. “Allegory and Myth in Plato’s *Republic*”

11/18 Session 22: TBD

11/20 Session 23: TBD

11/25 Session 24: TBD

12/2 Session 25: TBD

12/4 Session 26: TBD

12/9 Session 27: TBD

12/11 Session 28: TBD

12/20 Term Paper Due