

PHIL 301 A01 (12448) – PLATO

Fall 2020, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: available at <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/7097>

Instructor & Contact Information

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Office hours: Mon-Tue-Wed 3-4pm (or by appt.; sign-up is required)

Office: CLE B318

Course Description

This course surveys some of the work of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato (428/7-348/7 BCE). A student of Socrates and a teacher of Aristotle, Plato is one of the most influential and important figures in the history of Western thought. The mathematician and philosopher A. N. Whitehead remarked that: “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” It is no surprise, therefore, that today, more than 2300 years later, Plato’s ideas and methods continue to excite interest and reflection. Plato thought rigorously and systematically about a dizzying variety of topics. In this course we will consider some of his ideas, arguments and theories in political philosophy, moral theory, metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology. We will discuss such questions as: what is the best form of socio-political organization? What is justice? How do we come to know anything? What is knowledge? What is the nature of the soul or mind? In what sense, if any, do we survive after death? Whether or not we agree with Plato’s often surprising answers to these questions, there can be little doubt that his method of rigorous argument and careful reasoning in pursuit of those answers calls for careful study and contemplation as much today as during Plato’s lifetime.

Course Texts

Required: *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers)

Course Logistics

This will be an *asynchronous* online course. This means that there are no particular times of day when you need to listen to the course lectures, since they will be uploaded to the website and available for playback. There are still regular deadlines for completing your assigned work, however, so you will still be expected to keep up with what we are covering on any given week.

(1) **Reading Questions**

Value: 3% per assignment, 10 assignments (total value = 30%)

Assignment: At the beginning of each week, beginning in week 2 and for 10 weeks in total, students will be assigned short answer questions on the forthcoming week’s readings. The answers must be submitted online. Due to the nature of the assignment, late assignments will receive an automatic grade of “0.” The questions will be assigned a few days before the due date.

Due dates: each Sunday for 10 weeks (beginning in week 2)

(2) Quote and Comments

Value: 15% per assignment, 3 assignments (total value = 45%)

Length: ≥700 words (per assignment)

Assignment: Students will be assigned several passages from the text, of which they must pick one and submit their explanation of the passage online. The assignment will be made available 1-2 weeks before the due date.

Due dates: *see course schedule.*

(3) Essay

Value: 25%

Length: ≥1500 words

Assignment: Students will be assigned several essays questions, of which they must pick one and submit an essay on it online. The assignment will be made available 3-4 weeks before the due date.

Due dates: *see course schedule.*

Course Grading

Grades	GPV	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90-100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85-89	
A-	7	80-84	
B+	6	77-79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
B	5	73-76	
B-	4	70-72	
C+	3	65-69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60-64	
D	1	50-59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department. For additional information regarding grades, please see the September 2020 issue of the academic calendar (online here: [Grading](#)). All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that the student submits, whether individual or group work. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust, and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research, and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution

Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student

Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If the student is unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing sources, the instructor should be consulted. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension.

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the University's policy on academic integrity. For the policy, see the September 2020 edition of the academic calendar (online here: [University of Victoria Statement on Academic Integrity](#)).

Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Policy on Late or Missed Assignments

With the exception of the Reading Questions, all assignments submitted **on or before** the specified due dates will be adjudicated and returned with written comments. Assignments submitted **within one week after** the specified due dates will be adjudicated without penalty; however, they will be returned **without** written comments. Lastly, any assignment submitted **more than one week after** the specified due date will be adjudicated and returned without comments, and a penalty of **6%** per day will be assessed, unless the student can provide official documentation of the reason for the delay (e.g., a physician's note). The previous policies do not apply to students with documented disabilities; all attempt will be made to accommodate such students including, but not restricted to, providing make-up assignments and tests.

Accessibility

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability or chronic health condition, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with an advisor at the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). For more information about CAL, see: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>

Counseling Services

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with the university's **Counseling Services** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>) which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

Important Dates

Please consult the university calendar's **Academic Year Important Dates** for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, and so on: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>

Academic Advising

For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your CAPP report, please visit **Undergraduate Advising** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/>) or make an appointment with an adviser.

Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the **Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement**: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/>.

Course Schedule

Dates	Assignments
<u>Week 1</u> : Sep 9-13	<i>Plato's Time and Place</i> (No reading.)
<i>Meno</i>	
<u>Week 2</u> : Sep 14-20	<i>A Puzzle About Knowledge</i> Reading: <i>Meno</i>

<i>Phaedo</i>	
<u>Week 3:</u> Sep 21-27	<i>Why Not Fear Death? 3 Arguments for Immortality of Soul</i> Reading: <i>Phaedo</i> 59c-84b
<u>Week 4:</u> Sep 28-Oct 4	<i>Critiques & a Fourth Argument for Immortality</i> Reading: <i>Phaedo</i> 84c-118
<i>Republic</i>	
<u>Week 5:</u> Oct 5-11	<i>The Problem of Justice & How to Solve It</i> Reading: <i>Republic</i> I-II **1st Quote and Comment Due Oct 5th**
<u>Week 6:</u> Oct 12-18	<i>The Kallipolis in/ & the Soul</i> Reading: <i>Republic</i> III-IV
<u>Week 7-8:</u> Oct 19-Nov 1	<i>What Do the Philosopher-Guardians Know?</i> Reading: <i>Republic</i> V-VII **2nd Quote and Comment Due Oct 19th**
<u>Week 9:</u> Nov 2-8	<i>Five Cities & Five Souls: Why the Just Life is Best</i> Reading: <i>Republic</i> VIII-IX
<u>Week 10:</u> Nov 9-15	<i>Imitation & the Dangers of Art</i> Reading: <i>Republic</i> X **3rd Quote and Comment Sheet Due Nov 9th**
<i>Symposium</i>	
<u>Week 11:</u> Nov 16-22	<i>What is Erós? 5 Answers</i> Reading: <i>Symposium</i> 172a-198a
<u>Week 12-13:</u> Nov 23-Dec 6	<i>A Philosophical Approach to Erós</i> Reading: <i>Symposium</i> 198b-223d **Essay Due Dec 6**