

## **PHI 111: PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*** Spring 2009

### **General Information:**

- Instructor: Deke Gould
- Meeting time and location: Monday 6:00pm-9:00pm, 215 HL
- Office Hours: M 3:30pm-5:30pm, Pages Cafe in Bird Library
- email: [degould@syr.edu](mailto:degould@syr.edu)
- course website: <http://web.syr.edu/~degould/phi111Spring2009.html>

### **Texts:**

- Plato. *Republic*. Grube and Reeve, trans. ISBN: 978-0872201361 (REQUIRED)
- Annas. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. ISBN: 978-0198274292 (REQUIRED)
- Ferrari. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*. ISBN: 978-0521548427 (RECOMMENDED)
- Santas. *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*. ISBN: 978-0521548427 (RECOMMENDED)
- On occasion, further required and optional readings will be made available online. See the course website (URL above) for details.

### **Course Description:**

This course is designed to be an introduction to Western philosophy through the careful study of Plato's masterwork *The Republic*. Following the ambitions of the book, we will address such philosophical topics as the nature of the human soul, beauty, knowledge, justice and The Good itself. In this respect, the course will survey many different topics that could each easily occupy the focus of an entire semester. Our primary aim, however, will be to exercise the skill of critical thinking through the rigorous application of philosophical argumentation.

### **Course Objectives:**

In this course, students will be expected to hone their critical thinking skills. We will closely read a seminal text of Western thought, but our central objective will be to do as much philosophy as possible. That is, the student will be required to critically engage the text and other classmates during class discussions. Students will be expected to identify and evaluate arguments in the assigned reading. Furthermore, the students will learn to construct good arguments of their own in response to Plato's arguments.

### **Grading:**

The grading breakdown will be as follows. I will have more to say about each component below.

- In-class participation: 25%
- Weekly discussion board contributions: 25%
- 4 philosophical response essays: 50%

In general, grades in this class will reflect the following standard scale:

100%-94%: A; 93%-90%: A-;

89%-87%: B+; 86%-83%: B; 82%-80%: B-;

79%-77%: C+; 76%-73%: C; 72%-70%: C-;

69%-60%: D;

59%-0%: F.

### **Class Participation:**

As mentioned above, the student will be expected to participate in all class discussions; classroom participation is essential for the proper function of any philosophy course. Thus, students will be responsible for all class meetings and will be graded on their classroom participation. For most class meetings, I will record a point score for each student, ranging from zero (0) points to two (2) points. If the student misses a class meeting (for whatever reason, which is none of my business), he/she will receive zero (0) points for that class meeting. If the student attends but contributes nothing to the discussion, he/she will receive one (1) point for that day. I will record two (2) points if the student actively participates and engages the material.

If any student behaves in a disrespectful manner, he/she will be ejected from the classroom and will receive no participation credit for that day.

### **Attendance:**

In addition to the implicit attendance requirement, there is an explicit one: students may not miss more than two (2) class meetings, unless excused by the instructor. For each day missed over this two day limit, the student's overall grade will drop 10%.

### **Discussion Board:**

Students will be required to post at least one thoughtful question about the material assigned for the upcoming class meeting. Posts are due by the Saturday before the next class meeting, and must be at least fifty (50) words each. The discussion board posts will be graded and are worth a possible 5 points each.

### **Papers:**

Students will write four (4) short philosophical essays in response to some arguments they will encounter in Plato's *Republic*. Each paper must be no shorter than five hundred (500) words and no longer than one thousand (1000) words. Papers will be submitted electronically, and the procedures for paper submission will be explained in class. Late papers will not be accepted without documentation of university-excusable absence.

### **Statement on Academic Dishonesty:**

You should be familiar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty (consult the Office of Academic Integrity website: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>). I have no tolerance for cheating whatsoever: once the cheater is caught, **he/she will receive an F for the course** and I will send a letter to the dean.

All PHI 111 papers will be submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) for cross-checking. This service stores a copy of your work in a database for further cross-checking and no other purpose. If you have problems with these terms, you must let me know by the end of the first week of class.

### **Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations:**

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Ave., room 309, telephone 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary (i.e., before the end of the second week of classes). For further information, see the ODS website: <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

### **Course Schedule:**

You are expected to do the assigned reading *before* the date marked. NB: If I get the impression that students are not reading the assigned material, I will administer a pop quiz, the weight of which I will determine at that time.

- Mon, 12 Jan: “Plato” by Kraut in the Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy (see Course Website); Annas Chap. 1 “Introduction”.
- 19 Jan: **No Class (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)**
- 26 Jan: *Republic*, Book I; Annas Chap. 2 “Book One”.
- 2 Feb: Annas Chap. 3 “The Form of Plato’s Argument”; Annas Chap. 4 “The Just Society”.
- 9 Feb: *Republic*, Book II; Annas Chap. 5 “Parts and Virtues of State and Soul”; **FIRST ESSAY DUE.**
- 16 Feb: *Republic*, Book III; Annas Chap. 6 “The Defence of Justice”.
- 23 Feb: *Republic*, Book IV; Annas Chap. 7 “Plato’s State”.
- 2 Mar: *Republic*, Book V; Annas Chap. 8 “Belief, Knowledge and Understanding”; **SECOND ESSAY DUE.**
- 9 Mar: **No Class (Spring Break)**
- 16 Mar: Annas Chap. 9 “The ‘Theory’ of Forms”.
- 23 Mar: *Republic*, Book VI.
- 30 Mar: *Republic*, Book VII; Annas Chap. 10 “Understanding and the Good: Sun, Line, and Cave”; **THIRD ESSAY DUE.**
- 6 Apr: *Republic*, Book VIII; Annas Chap. 11 “Philosophy and Mathematics”.
- 13 Apr: *Republic*, Book IX; Annas Chap. 12 “The Benefits of Justice”.
- 20 Apr: *Republic*, Book X; Annas Chap. 13 “Plato’s Moral Theories”.
- 27 Apr: Annas Chap. 14 “Book Ten”; **FOURTH ESSAY DUE.**