Plato (190:352)

This course offers an introductory survey of Plato’s writing, examining the development of his thought through different dialogues. Emphasis is placed on the emergence of the doctrine of the Forms, and the tension between this doctrine and the political dimension of Plato’s philosophy. Plato’s writings are the focus of the course, and a significant amount of class-time will be devoted to discussion and analysis. All readings are in English and no prior familiarity with the topic is assumed.

Required Text: John Cooper, editor, Plato: Complete Works (isbn: 978-0872203495). The book is not available at the Rutgers bookstore, but dozens of new and used copies are available on Amazon and other outlets. Other readings are on Sakai.

Final Grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation and preparedness: 20%

Two exams during the course of the semester (15% each)

7-10 page paper (25%)

Class final (25%)

My office hours are Mondays, 2:30-3:30 at 104 Miller Hall.
SYLLABUS

Week 1: Introduction

Th. 1/23. Inexcusable Play-Doh® joke; Plato and Athens.

I. THE EARLY DIALOGUES

Week 2: Background—The Sophists


Week 3: Apology

M. 2/3-Th. 2/6. Reading: Plato, The Apology of Socrates; Blyth, “Socrates’ Trial and Conviction of the Jurors”; optional, Yonezawa, “Socrates’ Conception of Philosophy”

Week 4: Euthyphro

M. 2/10-Th. 2/13. Reading: Plato, Euthyphro; Rosen, “Piety and Justice in Plato’s Euthyphro”.

Week 5: Socrates in the Early Dialogues

M. 2/17 Reading: Vlastos, “Socrates’ Disavowal of Knowledge”; Nehemas “What Did Socrates Teach and to Whom?”

Th. 2/20. First Exam
II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE FORMS

Week 6: Background—Parmenides and Heraclitus


Week 7: The Forms

M. 3/3-Th. 3/6. Reading: Plato, Meno (focus on 63e-78c and 95a-107b); secondary reading TBA.

Week 8: The Forms

M. 3/10-Th. 3/13. Reading: Plato, Symposium (focus on 201d-223d); White, “Virtue in Plato’s Symposium”

M. 3/17-Th. 3/20: No Classes—Spring Break

Week 9: The Forms

M. 3/24-Th. 3/27. Reading: Plato, Republic Books V-VII; Fine, “Knowledge and Belief in Republic V-VII”

Week 10: The Forms and the Material World

M. 3/31-Th. 4/3. Reading: Plato, Cratylus; Sedley, “The Etymologies of the Cratylus”
Week 11: The Forms and the Material World

M. 4/7. Reading: Plato, Statesman; Schofield, “The Disappearance of the Philosopher King”

Th. 4/10. No Class. Second Exam (take home)

Week 12: The Forms and the Material World

M. 4/14. No Class—Passover

Th. 4/17. Reading: Plato, Timaeus 17a-47e; Democritus, Fragments; Broadie and Kenney, “The Creation of the World”.

Week 13: The Forms and the Material World

M. 4/21-Th. 4/24. Reading: Plato, Timaeus 48a-92c; Sedley “The Ideal of Godlikeness”

Week 14: The Forms and the Material World

M. 4/28-Th. 5/1. Reading: Plato, Phaedo 65b-66d and 79d-e; Republic 476a-b; Azzan Yadin-Israel, “The Political Cosmology of the Timaeus”

Week 15: Conclusion

M. 5/5. Plato, the Forms, and the Political.