Philosophy 302: Plato and Aristotle

Syllabus

Course Description

This course surveys the essential content of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle and considers more briefly some of the earlier thinkers whose ideas form the immediate context for their works. We will begin with dialogues in which Plato is thought to give a reasonably accurate depiction of his mentor Socrates. We will focus on the ethical theses defended in these works and on the standards for knowledge presupposed by them. We will then observe how these theses and standards, in combination with certain ideas and problems from pre-Socratic thought, led Plato to develop the first philosophical system: an integrated set of ideas about the fundamental nature of reality, man, knowledge, and value. We will then turn to Aristotle’s formulation of the principles of logic and the structure of science. Finally, we will study Aristotle’s own philosophical system, with a focus on the ways in which it is similar to and different from Plato’s.

Information

Instructor: Gregory Salmieri (gsalmieri@gmail.com, 412-576-2990)

Meetings: Tuesday 1:10pm – 4:10pm, Scott Hall 101.

Office Hours: In the hour after class or by appointment.

Books and other Reading Materials

There are three required books for the class.


The first two are translations of ancient Greek works, and it is important that you get these specific translations. These books are available as e-books, but the e-book versions omit some important information that is present in the print versions, so be sure to get the print versions. The Adamson book is based on a series of podcasts by the author. In the schedule of readings, I indicate the podcast episode corresponding to each chapter, and you are welcome to listen to the episode rather than reading the chapter, if you prefer. But please do buy the book. Not having it to refer to will put you at a disadvantage when taking quizzes (on which, see below) and writing the papers. This book is available in e-book as well as print formats, and you may prefer one of the e-book formats because they are less-expensive and have search functionality.

Many of the course readings, especially in the first several weeks, will be materials that I have prepared myself, mostly by updating older translations of Platonic dialogues that have fallen into the public domain. These are available as PDFs on our Sakai site and are linked to from the schedule of readings.
There are many quality translations available, but I have chosen to prepare these myself for several reasons: (1) This material is free to use, so you don’t have to spend as much on books; (2) We will be reading a lot of different texts and thinking about how they relate to one another, and this is a lot easier if key terms are translated in a uniform way across different texts; by making or revising the translations myself, I can ensure that this is the case. (3) There are many choices that a translator has to make in translating a text, and these have no single right answer; each choice will emphasize some elements of the text at the expense of others; by making or revising translations myself, I can ensure that the texts we are reading emphasize the issues we are going to focus on in the course.

Assignments and Grading

There will be between ten and fourteen quizzes over the course of the semester, administered through Sakai, which will be collectively worth 20% of the grade; two papers, each worth 30% of the grade; and a final exam worth 20%. Extra credit may be awarded for excellent participation in class discussions.

Quizzes:

Quizzes will typically be due by 8:00am on class days. (They will be accepted without penalty until 1:00pm on that day, but after 8:00am I will be a lot stricter about what I accept as a valid excuse for failing to take the quiz.) After 1:00pm on the day a quiz is due, the quiz cannot be taken or made up under any circumstances; however, if you have a very good reason for missing a quiz, I will drop it from your average, rather than letting the zero stand.

Any material assigned for or discussed in class may appear on a quiz, but the quiz due on the day of a given class will usually with the readings assigned for that class.

The quizzes have several, related purposes: (1) They ensure that you are doing the reading. (2) They give both you and me a sense of how much you are getting from the readings, prior to class discussion. (3) They call your attention to points in the readings that will be relevant to class discussion or to the papers and final exam. (4) They help you to develop the skill of finding evidence in a text that proves or refutes specific interpretive claims, including the skills of distinguishing between subtly different positions that may be endorsed in a text and of recognizing the same position when formulated in different ways.

The quizzes are difficult, and students often fail them on the first attempt, but you may take each quiz three times (before the due-date) to try to improve your grade, and you can take as much time as you like on each attempt.

I recommend reading through the quiz quickly before doing the readings for the week to prime yourself to be on the lookout for the information asked for. But then be sure to do the readings in full before taking the quiz, rather than just hunting through them for the answers. (The questions are designed so that if you just hunt through the readings for the answers, you’ll often miss important information and answer incorrectly.) Once you’ve read the assigned readings, return to the quiz and try to answer the questions first from memory, and then return to the text for anything you can’t remember or that you need to get clearer on the details of. (Since you have many of the texts in PDF format, you can use the search feature to help you find such details.)

Papers
Each paper should be six to eight double space pages. Prompts will be assigned at least two weeks before the due date. All prompts will involve both interpreting Platonic and/or Aristotelian texts and evaluating one or more of the positions taken in the texts.

Late papers will be accepted with three points deducted from the grade for each day late.

In all aspects of the course, but especially in writing the papers, you are expected to know and comply with Rutgers academic integrity policy.

Final Exam

The final exam will be held at the time specified for this course in the exam schedule. Information about the exam (including how to prepare for it) will be made available on the final day of class. Until then, the best was to prepare is to keep current with the readings, attend all the class sessions, work on the papers (once assigned), and come to me with any questions or concerns you may have about your mastery of the material.

Schedule of readings and assignments

A schedule of readings and assignments can be found on the Sakai site. The present version is provisional, and it will be updated as needed over the course of the semester. I reserve the right to modify the readings and quizzes assigned for a class until five days prior to the class session. Paper due dates may be pushed back at any time, but they will not be moved forward. Students are responsible for knowing any changes to the schedule that may be announced in class or by email, even if they are not (yet) reflected in the schedule on Sakai.

Class Schedule

The following class schedule is provisional, and will be modified as needed over the course of the term.

9/1 | Class 1: Introduction to (and context for) the Course

Readings:

- Course syllabus
- Plato, *Protagoras*, 309a–320c
- Salmieri, “A Budget Tour of Greek Philosophy Before Socrates,” Sections A–C
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*
- Chapter 1 (or Episode 1)
- Chapter 12 (or Episode 14)
- Chapter 15 (or Episode 18)

Assignments:
9/15 | Class 2: Socrates and his Project
Readings:
• Plato, Apology
• Adamson, Classical Philosophy
• Chapter 13, (or Episode 15)
• Chapter 14 (or Episode 16)
Assignments:
• Quiz 2 due by 8:00 am

9/22 | Class 3: Socrates on Knowledge and Method
Readings:
• Plato, Euthyphro
• Plato, Laches 184d–192b
• Plato, Meno 70a–77b
Assignments:
• Quiz 3 by 8:00 am

9/29 | Class 4: Socratic Ethics
Readings:
• Plato, Meno, 77b–79e
• 466b–468e
• 468e–472c
• 474b–475e
• 507a–e
• 508c–509a
• Plato, Gorgias
• 466b–468e


- 468e–472c
- 474b–475e
- 507a–e
- 508c–509a
- Plato, *Protagoras*
- 319b–320c
- 329b–330b
- 332a–334c
- 349b–362a
- Plato, *Euthydemus*, 278e–282d
- Plato, *Philebus*
- 11b–d
- 20b–23a
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*, Chapter 17 (or Episode 20)

Assignments:

- Quiz 4 by 8:00 am

10/6 | Class 5: New ideas in Plato’s *Meno*

Readings:

- Plato, *Meno* 80a–100c
- Salmieri, “A Budget Tour of Greek Philosophy Before Socrates,” D.
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*
- Chapter 4 (or Episode 4)
- Chapter 18 (or Episode 21)

Assignments:

- Quiz 5 by 8:00 am

10/13 | Class 6: Plato’s Other-worldly Metaphysics

Readings:
10/20 | Class 7: Plato's *Republic*

Readings:
- Reeve, summaries of *Republic* I–III
- Plato, *Republic* II 357a–376c
- Plato, *Republic* III, 412b–417b
- Plato, *Republic* IV, 419a–427c
- Reeve, summaries of *Republic* IV–X
- Plato, *Republic* IV, 427d–445e
- Plato, *Republic* IX, 580d–592b
- Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246a–249d
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*, chapter 21 (or Episode 25)

Assignments:
- Quiz 6 by 8:00 am

10/27 | Class 8: Platonic Epistemology

Readings:
- Plato, *Phaedo*, 96b–105c
● Plato, *Republic* VI 504e–511e
● Plato, *Republic* VII 511e–521b
● Plato, *Symposium*, 201d–212a
● Salmieri, “A Budget Tour of Greek Philosophy Before Socrates,” G
● Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*
● Chapter 9 (or *Episode 10*)
● Chapter 21 (or *Episode 26*)

Assignments:
● *Quiz 8* by 8:00 am

10/30 | *Paper 1* due by 11:55 pm

11/3 | Class 9: Introduction to Aristotle’s This-Worldly Philosophy

Readings:
● Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A.1
● Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium* I.5
● Aristotle, *Categories* 1–5
● Leroi, Aristotle’s Lagoon (video)
● *Part 1*
● *Part 2*
● *Part 3*
● *Part 4*
● Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*
● Chapter 29 (or *Episode 34*)
● Chapter 32 (or *Episode 38*)

Assignments:
● *Quiz 9* by 8:00 am

11/10 | Class 10: Aristotle on Knowledge and Science
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
- VI.3
- VI.6

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*
- I.1–2
- I.5
- I.11
- I.24
- II.1–2
- II.7–10
- II.14
- II.19

Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*
- Chapter 30 (or *Episode 35*)
- Chapter 31 (or *Episode 36*)

Assignments:
- Quiz 10 by 8:00 am

11/17 | Class 11: Aristotle on Causality and the Principles of Change

Readings:
- Aristotle, *Physics*
- I.5–9
- II.3
- II.7
- Aristotle, *Generation and Corruption*, I.4
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*, Chapter 33 (or *Episode 39*)

Assignments:
- Quiz 11 by 8:00 am
11/24 | Class 12: Aristotle on Nature

Readings:
● Aristotle, *Physics* II.8–9
● Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium* I.1
● Salmieri, “A Budget Tour of Greek Philosophy Before Socrates,” H
● Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*

Assignments:
● Quiz 12 by 8:00 am

12/1 | Class 13: Aristotle’s Ethics

Readings:
● Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
  ● I.1–5
  ● I.7
  ● I.13
  ● II
  ● VI.1–2
  ● VI.4–5
  ● VI.8
  ● VI.12
● Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*

Assignments:
Quiz 13 by 8:00 am

12/8 | Class 14: Aristotle’s Ethics (continued)

Readings:
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X. 6–8
- Adamson, *Classical Philosophy*, Chapter 39 (or Episode 47)

Assignments:
- Quiz 14 by 8:00 am

12/11 | Paper 2 due by 11:55 pm

12/15 | Final Exam.