

Hendrik Lorenz, PHI 500: Plato's *Phaedrus*

Plato's *Phaedrus* is a celebrated text that is richer in literary features than many other Platonic dialogues. It also features substantive philosophical engagement with issues to do with sexual desire, love, psychology, rhetoric and dialectic. In several ways, the relationship between the theories proposed and discussed in the *Republic* and those of the *Phaedrus* is problematic, especially so far as the theory of the tripartite soul is concerned.

The seminar will offer a survey of Plato's *Phaedrus* that will also include close readings of selected passages and some comparative discussion of the *Republic*. Depending on students' interests, we may engage in some comparisons with other dialogues that deal with the same or closely related topics, especially the *Symposium*. Furthermore, I would like to place what is said in the *Phaedrus* about "love" (*erôs*, often better translated as "lust" or "sexual desire"), some of which is disturbing, in the historical context of ancient Greek practices of homosexuality and pederasty.

The seminar will not require knowledge of ancient Greek. Excellent English translations of the dialogues are available, and although there will be discussion of linguistic issues raised by Plato's ancient Greek texts, their significance will be clarified for all participants.

Pre-generals students in Philosophy can use this seminar to earn history units in ancient philosophy, either by writing papers or by doing take-home exams. Students who wish to do unit work with me in the Spring semester should do so in conjunction with the seminar. Students may volunteer to do a presentation, which can be used to satisfy the Department's requirement that students give three in-seminar presentations. Students from other departments may take the course for a grade by writing a paper related to the course topics or by doing a take-home exam.

We will use the translations of Plato's dialogues that are in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*.

The course will begin by Zoom and may switch to in-person/Zoom hybrid mode at some point during the semester.

Tentative timetable

- 1 (2/5) Introduction to the seminar
- 2 (2/12) 227a-237b: introduction, Lysias' speech, criticism
- 3 (2/19) 237b-243e: Socrates' first speech
- 4 (2/26) Greek homosexuality and pederasty
- 5 (3/5) 243e-247c: Socrates' second speech: three types of divine madness, the immortality of the soul, myth of the soul
- 6 (3/12) 247c-250de: The soul's vision of being, fall and incarnation, recollection
- 7 (3/19) 250e-257b: Love and lust, conclusion of speech
- 8 (3/26) The tripartite soul in *Republic* and *Phaedrus*
- 9 (4/2) 257b-261a: rhetoric and myth of cicadas
- 10 (4/9) 261a-269c: dialectic and rhetoric
- 11 (4/16) 269c-274b: more on dialectic and rhetoric
- 12 (4/23) 274b-279c: orality and writing, Lysias and Isocrates