

**DRAFT**

PHI500-CLA510\_F2019 The Philosophy of Plato  
 Plato's Republic: A Second Reading

Wed. 1:30-4:20  
 201 Marx Hall

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We will try to get a grip on key parts of the argument of Plato's *Republic* by approaching it from two complementary angles. Our first and principal project will be a slow reading of about one-third of the dialogue, beginning with the completion of the argument in Book X and then continuing with a (re-)reading of Books I and II in light of its conclusions. In the last few weeks of term we'll turn to a more in-depth examination of some of the political themes raised in these Books, but now ranging over the dialogue as a whole.

The course is conceived as a 'second reading', or an *n*th one. That is: all participants will be assumed to have read the *Republic* as a whole already, and to have it freshly in mind. Moreover, in interpreting it we will make free use of later parts of the text in interpreting earlier ones (as well as of Plato's other works). The hope is that beginning with Plato's final results in Book X will make it easier to keep in view the structure and agenda of the whole, as a single architectonically complex argument.

The terrain we will be covering is focussed on political and ethical argument -- including the politics of culture, in the discussions of poetry in Books II-III and X. Topics to be considered include: the category of 'mimetic poetry', its psychological effects and its political significance; the choice of lives, in this world and for all time, and its implications for demotic or unphilosophical virtue; the problem of *pleonexia* and injustice, as framed by different versions of the immoralist challenge; Plato's 'two-level' approach to that problem, and the relation of the ethical to the political in his thought; the grounding of both social and individual justice in human nature [*phusis*]; the content and agenda of the *Republic* as a constitution [*politeia*] and a work of political theory; the solution to the problem through the mapping of functions [*erga*] on to natures [*phuseis*] in the just society, and in particular through the governing role of *reason*; the postulation of a rational political class and its cultural requirements.

On each point we will work hard to engage with the details of the text, and with Plato's multipurpose, complex, often deliberately underdetermined or even self-undermining authorial strategies. We will try to ask: what is Plato's *purpose* here? What is the *function* of this choice of phrasing, of various 'dramatic' features (imagery, characterization, surprise,

comedy), and of intertextual allusion and cross-references within the *Republic* itself? Why does the argument proceed in *this* way and not in some other which was equally available? How should Plato's 'literary' choices inform our construal of his argument? These questions lead immediately into broader ones: How do various local authorial moves relate to the *skopos*, the goal or target which structures the *Republic* as a whole? If the *Republic* is to be read as a political theory, in what ways is it deeply like and unlike all the others, then and now? What might it have to offer (today/again/even now/always already) which other texts do not?

### Texts and Readings:

No particular translation of the *Republic* is required: Grube-Reeve (Hackett), Bloom (Basic Books), Griffith (Cambridge), and Shorey (Loeb) are all good. For the Greek text, either version of the Oxford Classical Text (edited by Burnet or by Slings) is fine. J. Adam's two-volume edition with notes, appendices, etc. is a wonderful work -- still very useful if you have even a little Greek (the pdf will be available on Blackboard). In some weeks readings from other dialogues will be highly relevant; everybody should own the Hackett *Plato: Complete Works* (ed. John M. Cooper), which includes the Grube-Reeve *Republic*.

The 'secondary literature' on the *Republic* is unmanageably vast. For this course no *particular* works are required reading, but steady exploration is expected (and likewise, of course, appropriate use of scholarly literature in your papers). Some bibliographies will be made available on Blackboard, as well as a great many recommended/interesting papers in pdf form, sorted by topic. Everyone should also have a 'companion' volume to the text, such as the *Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (ed. G.R.F. Ferrari), or a single-author volume such as Nettleship's *Lectures* or C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*. Beyond that, explore on your own, and be sure to read some works which are either not recent (e.g. some Proclus, or the great Victorian Platonists: Grote, Mill, Jowett, Campbell, Nettleship) or not in English (e.g. anything by Mario Vegetti). For each week, the Schedule below identifies works which I am particularly likely to talk about in class, so some acquaintance with these will always be a particularly good idea.

As a way of enlisting the help of the hivemind, in-class presentations on some important works or debates in the secondary literature are invited; in particular, on the Arruzza and Thakkar books to be discussed with their authors in Weeks 11 and 12. Presentations should be 20-25 minutes.

Evaluation: Graduate students in Philosophy are encouraged to obtain a 'unit' through regular attendance and participation and the writing of a substantial research paper. You are also welcome to obtain a unit through an oral exam, perhaps tackling a subset of the 'Few Questions'. Students in other Departments should consult with me about how to use the course to fulfil their own program requirements.

Tentative Schedule:

Primary readings are the parts of the text on which we will focus during the session; secondary readings are recommended; 'Questions' are from the 'Just a Few Questions' handout posted on Blackboard. Secondary readings are for the most part posted on Blackboard in the folder for the relevant Week, along with many other interesting things to read.

Week 1 (Sept. 11): Course Introduction

*Primary Readings:* Plato, *Republic*

*Secondary Readings:* Menn, 'Politeia'; Barney, 'Ring-Composition'; Morrison, 'Utopia'

I. The End:

Week 2 (Sept. 18): Mimesis and Truth:

*Primary Readings:* *Republic* Book X, 595b-608b, also: Books II-III 376d-402c, 414b-5e, 459c-60a

*Secondary Readings:* Schofield, 'Lie', Richardson Lear, 'Mimesis', Moss, 'Imitative Art'... (see Book X folder on Blackboard for further options)

Questions: 1-8

Week 3 (Sept. 25): Mimesis cont'd: 'The Most Serious Charge'

*Primary Readings:* *Republic* 603c-8b

*Secondary Readings:* as for Weeks I and 2

Questions: 9-16

Week 4 (Oct. 2): Immortality and the Choice of Lives:

*Primary Readings:* *Republic* 608b-end

*Secondary Readings:* Wilberding, 'Myth'; Halliwell, 'Journey'... (see Book X folder)

Questions: 17-37

The Beginning:

Week 5 (Oct. 9): Dramatic setting, Cephalus, Polemarchus

*Primary Readings:* *Republic* Book I to 336b

*Secondary Readings:* Kahn, 'Book I', Gifford, 'Irony', DiRado, 'Cephalus', Plato, *Hippias Minor*... (see Book I folder)

Questions: 38-55

Week 6 (Oct. 16): Thrasymachus and the 'Immoralist Challenge'

*Primary Readings:* *Republic* Book I, 336b-354c, also Antiphon, fragments on justice, Anonymous Iamblichus

*Secondary Readings:* Chappell, 'Thrasymachus' (x2), Anderson, 'Thrasymachus', Barney, SEP article 'Callicles and Thrasymachus'... (see Book I folder)

Questions: 56-64

Week 7 (Oct. 23): Is Thrasymachus Refuted?

*Primary Readings: Republic I, 339b-54c*

*Secondary Readings: Barney, 'Thrasymachus', 'Techne' paper (ms), Book I folder*

Questions: 65-79

-- Fall Recess --

Week 8 (Nov. 6): Glaucon and Adeimantus

*Primary Readings: Republic II to 367e*

*Secondary Readings: Weiss, 'Wise Guys', Broadie, 'Virtue'... (Book I folder, since I've put all 'immoralism' papers together there)*

Question: 81-88

Week 9 (Nov. 13): Socrates' Strategy and the 'City of Pigs'

*Primary Readings: Republic II to 376e*

*Secondary Readings: Cooper, 'Two Theories', Barney, 'Nostalgia', Ferrari, 'City and Soul' Chs. 2-3, Lear, 'Inside and Outside', Williams, 'City and Soul'...*

Questions: 89-97

### III. The Middle: Platonic Politics:

Week 10 (Nov. 20): Natures, Functions, and the Rule of Reason

*Primary Readings: Republic IV-V*

*Secondary Readings: TBA*

-- Thanksgiving Recess --

Week 11 (Dec. 4): Unjust Selves and Societies

*Primary Readings: Republic Books VIII-IX*

*Secondary Readings: Arruzza, A Wolf in the City, others TBA*

Special Guest Star: Cinza Arruzza (New School), author of *A Wolf in the City*

Week 12 (Dec. 11): Plato Today!

*Primary Readings: Thakkar, Plato as Critical Theorist*

*Secondary Readings: Vegetti, Un Paradigma in Cielo, Crossman, Plato Today, Badiou, The Republic of Plato...*

Special Guest Star: Jonny Thakkar (Swarthmore), author of *Plato as Critical Theorist*

**Date TBA: Work-in-Progress Conference with UPenn?**