

PHIL 310: The Philosophy of Plato
MWF 2-3pm — BUCH A201

Plato's dialogues embody a series of questions that have never lost their immediate vigour: how we should live, what there is, and how we can know. But it is the way that Plato posed those questions – his rigour, his artful use of dialogue to justify both sides of a question, and the inspired vitality of his central arguments – that renew the value of his original writing for each generation. In this course, we engage with a range of Plato's richest and most challenging works, and explore the evolution of his central ideas and methods, including his attempt to differentiate the ideal philosopher from the student of language and persuasion or the natural scientist; his reinterpretation of the Socratic method as a sharp dialectical instrument for locating the truth; his development of a famous case for eternal mathematical and ethical patterns and his application of these Forms to questions in ontology and epistemology; his moral and political theory; and his most developed articulations of the philosopher's function in society.

REQUIRED TEXT

J. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works* (Hackett, 1997)
Secondary readings will be circulated online.

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hour: M 4.15pm

TEACHING ASSISTANTS Amer Amer and John Moon

COURSE WEBPAGE socrates.arts.ubc.ca/310

Please read the required text before each lecture, and bring the text with you to class.
Students must adhere to the University's standards for academic integrity.
(For guidance, visit learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides).
Students with special needs are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

EVALUATION

(See detailed Evaluation Structure on final page of syllabus)

Question Papers (2)	25%
Essay	30%
Research paper	35%
Class participation	5%
Your philosophical system	5%

NB: This course has no final examination.

A message from your AMS: The UBC AMS Speakeasy

Speakeasy is a free, confidential student service offering one-on-one peer support, information and referrals to the UBC community, in a non-judgmental safe space.

No issue is too big or too small, and the service operates on a drop-in basis.
Mon-Fri 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. – AMS Nest front desk or doorbell outside room 3121.

Assignments will be submitted via [TurnItIn.com](https://www.turnitin.com). See course webpage for details.

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Date	Topics	Primary Texts
<i>Introduction</i>		
Wed, Sep 9	Introductory discussion	Online: Bird's Eye View
Fri, Sep 11	Introducing Plato	
Mon, Sep 14	Introducing Socrates	<i>Symposium</i> 172A-178A; <i>Apology</i>
Wed, Sep 16	Socratic method	<i>Laches</i> 187D-194A; <i>Theaet.</i> 172A-177C
I. <i>Symposium: Contest & Ascent – Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso</i>		
Fri, Sep 18	Phaedrus & Mythic Explanation	<i>Symp.</i> 178B-180C
Mon, Sep 21	Pausanias & the Sophists	<i>Symp.</i> 180C-185E; <i>Protag.</i> 314C-335D
Wed, Sep 23	Eryximachus & Natural Explanation	<i>Symp.</i> 185E-189D; <i>Phaedo</i> 96A-102A
Fri, Sep 25	Aristophanes & Athenian Comedy	<i>Symp.</i> 189D-194E
Mon, Sep 28	Agathon & Athenian Tragedy	<i>Symp.</i> 195A-201C; <i>Rep.</i> 10, 595A-608B
Wed, Sep 30	Diotima and Socrates	<i>Symp.</i> 201D-212C; <i>Arist., Met.</i> 1.6 (online)
Fri, Oct 2	Plato's Patterns (Forms)	<i>Phaedo</i> 72E-77D, 95A-107A <i>Parm.</i> 130A-135D
Mon, Oct 5	The Philosopher and the Line	<i>Republic</i> 6, 484A-513E
Wed, Oct 7	The Cave and the Good	<i>Republic</i> 7, 514A-533B
Fri, Oct 9	The Speech of Alcibiades	<i>Symp.</i> 212C-223D
Mon, Oct 12	Thanksgiving day: No class	
II. <i>Phaedrus: Finding Wings – Molto vivace – presto</i>		
Wed, Oct 14	Phaedrus' <i>logos</i> ; self-knowledge	<i>Phaedrus</i> 227A-230E
Fri, Oct 16	Lysias' speech; Socrates' first speech	<i>Phaedrus</i> 230E-242D
Mon, Oct 19	The opening speeches (cont'd); sophists	<i>Protagoras</i> 309A-335C
Wed, Oct 21	Socrates' second speech; the Platonic <i>psychē</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i> 244A-257B; <i>Rep.</i> 4, 435C-441C
Fri, Oct 23	Platonic myth	<i>Rep.</i> 10, 608B-621D; <i>Gorg.</i> 523A-end
Mon, Oct 26	Platonic recollection	<i>Meno</i> 70A-86C, <i>Phaedo</i> 72E-77A
III. <i>Reflection: Putting it into words – Adagio molto e cantabile</i>		
Wed, Oct 28	Speech and writing	<i>Phaedrus</i> 257C-279C
Fri, Oct 30	Dialectic: "the gift of the gods"	<i>Philebus</i> 14B-20A; <i>Soph.</i> 216A-250B (opt'l)
Mon, Nov 2	Patterns: Challenges of the sensible	<i>Theaetetus</i> 151-186E; <i>Sophist</i> 262E, 237A
Wed, Nov 4	cont'd	
Fri, Nov 6	Knowledge: True belief with a <i>logos</i> ?	<i>Theaetetus</i> 187A-210D Plato's birthday: November 7
Mon, Nov 9	Plato's <i>Parmenides</i>	<i>Parm.</i> 126A-136A
Wed, Nov 11	Remembrance day: No class	
Fri, Nov 13	Plato's <i>Timaeus</i> : Synthesis	<i>Tim.</i> 27C-29D, 48E-52D
IV. <i>Completion: The philosopher's return to the cave – Allegro molto assai</i>		
Mon, Nov 16	Plato's defense of justice	<i>Rep.</i> 1, 327A-354C; 2, 357A-369B
Wed, Nov 18	What is Plato's <i>Republic</i> ? <i>Psychē</i> & <i>Polis</i>	<i>Rep.</i> 2, 369B-385C; 4, 427D-441C
Fri, Nov 20	Plato's tripartite <i>psychē</i> revisited	<i>Rep.</i> 4, 427D-441C; 9, 588B-592B
Mon, Nov 23	Platonic education	<i>Rep.</i> 7, all (including review)
Wed, Nov 25	Platonic "feminism"	<i>Rep.</i> 5, 449A-464A
Fri, Nov 27	Platonic constitutions	<i>Rep.</i> 8-9, all
Mon, Nov 30	Imitation and the Myth of Er	<i>Rep.</i> 10, all; <i>Timaeus</i> 27-29, 48-52 (rev'w)
Coda		
Wed, Dec 2	Closing the circle: Platonism	
Fri, Dec 4	Plato's legacy, Aristotle, and later Platonism	

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Evaluation Structure

Question Papers (Take-Home Tests) [25% total. *Best one of two graded*].

QP 1: Posted Sep 25, Due Oct 2.

QP 2: Posted Nov 6, Due Nov 13.

STRUCTURE

Five factual questions (1 mark each). Answer in just a few words.

Example: Which speaker in the *Symposium* offers a medical explanation of love?

Two paragraph questions (5 marks each). Answer between 300-600 words. The best answers will articulate a clear thesis, defend it with a clear argumentative structure, compare a range of relevant primary (ancient) texts, and entertain and reply to at least one potential counterargument.

Example: Briefly explain the view that the only good for a human being is “virtue” or excellence (*aretē*). Do you believe that this position is credible? Explain why, or why not, offering arguments that directly cite textual evidence from Plato.

Essay (Short essay, up to 1200 words), Due Oct 16 [30%]

Suggested topics and guidelines will be posted online. *Early submission encouraged*.

STRUCTURE

Articulate and argue for a creative *thesis* in answer to a *question*. Your question should relate to the course material. Your question may be drawn from the topics posted in the official guidelines, or you may formulate your own question; if you’re in any doubt, feel free to contact the instructor. You should directly reference and engage with primary (ancient) philosophical texts. You may also research and engage with modern scholarship in the area, but this is not required for this assignment.

Example *question*: Could Socrates fall in love?

Example *thesis*: Socrates could fall in love, provided that “love” is understood as an emotion beneficial to the lover and the beloved.

Research paper (up to 2500 words), Due Dec 4 [35%]

STRUCTURE

Examine a research question related to the course material, and engage critically with current academic scholarship in that field. You may choose to adapt your first essay assignment (in which case you are welcome to reuse language from that assignment).

Presentation or Participation, due at any point during term [5%]

Due at any point during the term. **Online sign-up sheet to be posted on course webpage.**

ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS (COMPLETE ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING)

- Offer a 10-minute presentation to the class on an academic topic in the syllabus, and offer questions for in-class discussion.
- Post at least 1 original article, and post at least 3 comments on others' articles, on the Ancient Philosophy blog at socrates.arts.ubc.ca/agora.

Your philosophical system, due in the exam period [5%]

- During the term, begin a journal or scrapbook considering the application of ancient philosophical principles to real-life or fictional situations, which you might draw from your own experience, newspapers, or literature outside the course. You may choose to journal privately or publicly (for example, via a blog, Twitter, or Facebook). In the examination period, submit your journal with a written **summary** (500 words or more) of your considered views on the three “core questions” of ancient philosophy: **what exists, how we have knowledge, and how we should live.**