USC Philosophy 411: Plato  
4.0 units

Fall 2017, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Location: Von Kleinsm id Center 260

Instructor: Professor Ralph Wedgwood  
wedgwood@usc.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 – 3:30 pm, Stonier Hall 222

Course description

This class will explore the philosophy of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (c. 427 – 348 BC). Our study of his philosophy will fall into three parts:

1. In the first part, we will study some of the works that are often called “early Socratic dialogues”, which were probably written in the early part of Plato’s career: Socrates’ Apology, Euthyphro, Crito, and Protagoras.

2. In the second part, we will study some of the works that are often viewed as belonging to Plato’s “Middle Period”, and as having been written before The Republic: Meno, Phaedo, Symposium.

3. In the third part, we will study Plato’s most famous work, which is often viewed as coming towards the end of his “Middle Period”, The Republic.

The recommended translations of Plato’s works are those in Plato: Complete Works, ed. John M. Cooper (Hackett, 1997).

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is for you to come to an in-depth understanding of Plato’s philosophical thought. Primarily, this will involve reading, understanding, and interpreting these difficult and complex texts that Plato wrote around 2400 years ago, and presenting and defending your interpretations of Plato’s thought both in your written work and in your contributions to our class discussions. Interpreting and defending these texts will also involve thinking critically about the philosophical issues that Plato himself was grappling with.

After taking this course, you will have acquired knowledge of some of Plato’s main ideas and arguments. More importantly, (i) you will have improved your ability for independently reading and comprehending complicated texts – in a way that will enable you to identify and state the main claims of these texts, and to reconstruct the texts’ key arguments in favour of these claims; (ii) you will also have developed your skills at critically evaluating such claims and arguments;
and (iii) you will have practised your skills at giving clear and persuasive arguments of your own – both in your writing and in your contribution to oral discussions – to defend your interpretation and evaluations of these claims and arguments.

**Normal prerequisites**

The normal prerequisite for this course is two Philosophy courses. (Others may enrol with the my permission.)

**Paper Assignments and Grading**

There will be three paper assignments, one for each of the three parts of the course. Suggested paper topics will be distributed at least two weeks before the due date. You may also write your paper on a different topic if you wish – but only after consultation with me.

Your papers should be turned in electronically via the course Blackboard site.

Each of these papers will count for one-third of your overall grade for this course. There will be no final exam.

**Office Hours**

I will be holding office hours on Tuesdays, from 2 pm until 3.30 pm. Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions about the class or the readings, but they’re also a chance to chat about how the course is going, to tell me about your ideas about any of the moral issues we’re discussing, to test out a plan for one of your papers on me, or to ask for general advice. Don’t hesitate to take advantage of this opportunity.

**Reading**

The primary reading for the course will be the original texts of these dialogues of Plato. There are many good translations, but not all published translations are reliable. If you prefer to read them in a different translation from the recommended Hackett translation, please ask for my advice first.

In each case, you should read the text that is assigned for each class before the class; I will expect to discuss the text with you in the class.

Over the course of the semester, some supplementary writings by modern commentators, and some of my own lecture notes, will be made available from the course Blackboard site.
Schedule of classes and assignments

1. Tuesday 22 August: Introduction to the study of Plato’s philosophy

Part 1: The early Socratic dialogues

2. Thursday 24 August: Socrates’ Apology
3. Tuesday 29 August: Socrates’ Apology
4. Thursday 31 August: Euthyphro
5. Tuesday 5 September: Euthyphro
6. Thursday 7 September: Crito
7. Tuesday 12 September: Crito
8. Thursday 14 September: Protagoras
9. Tuesday 19 September: Protagoras
10. Thursday 21 September: Protagoras

Paper 1 due: Monday 25 September

Part 2: Middle-period dialogues

11. Tuesday 26 September: Meno
12. Thursday 28 September: Meno
13. Tuesday 3 October: Meno
14. Thursday 5 October: Phaedo
15. Tuesday 10 October: Phaedo
16. Thursday 12 October: Phaedo
17. Tuesday 17 October: Symposium
18. Thursday 19 October: Symposium
19. Tuesday 24 October: Symposium

Paper 2 due: Monday 30 October

Part 3: The Republic

20. Thursday 26 October: Republic, Book 1
21. Tuesday 31 October: Republic, Book 1
22. Thursday 2 November: Republic, Book 2
23. Tuesday 7 November: Republic, Books 2-4
24. Thursday 9 November: Republic, Book 4
25. Tuesday 14 November: Republic, Book 4
26. Thursday 16 November: Republic, Books 5-7
27. Tuesday 21 November: Republic, Books 5-7
28. Thursday 23 November – Thanksgiving
29. Tuesday 28 November: Republic, Books 8-9
30. Thursday 30 November: Republic, Book 10

Paper 3 due: Monday 4 December
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

**Student Counseling Services (SCS)** – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** – 1 (800) 273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

**Sexual Assault Resource Center**
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance** – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

**Bias Assessment Response and Support**
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs**
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

**Student Support and Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

**Diversity at USC**
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

**USC Emergency Information**
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

**USC Department of Public Safety – UPC:** (213) 740-4321 – **HSC:** (323) 442-1000 – **24-hour emergency or to report a crime.**
Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu