

Philosophical Perspectives I

Professor Daniel Moerner (moerner@uchicago.edu)

Student Hours: Thursday, 1-3 pm, Stuart 222, or other times by request.

Summary: This course will examine conceptions of the good life in ancient Greek philosophical thought. For many ancient Greeks, the question of how to live was intimately connected to the question of what it is to be a human. We will see these themes develop in the early dialogues of Plato, thought by many to express the views of the historical Socrates, in the Greek tragedies of Sophocles, in Plato's great middle dialogue, Republic, and finally in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. We will also see alternative and complementary perspectives on these topics from figures including ancient Greek women, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the contemporary philosopher Rosalind Hursthouse.

Texts: The following books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op. All other readings will be supplied through Canvas.

1. Plato, Five Dialogues (Hackett, trans. G.M.A. Grube)
2. Sophocles, Theban Plays (Hackett, trans. Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff)
3. Plato, Republic (Cambridge, trans. Tom Griffith)
4. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (Cambridge, trans. Roger Crisp). Also available as an ebook from the library (<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uchicago/detail.action?doc>)

Please use these translations for our class. If purchasing these books involves any hardship, please send me an email. I have spare copies of these books that I can lend out to some students.

Course Requirements:

1. 10%: Course Participation and Attendance: Attendance is mandatory, and any unexcused absence will significantly harm your participation grade. In this course, you will also be graded on the quality of your participation. Good participation is a matter of both making positive contributions in class and serving as a good classroom citizen. We will spend time in the first session discussing participation and setting norms for the class.
2. 10%: Reading Questions: By 9 pm the night before each class, please email me a question or thought you have about the reading for the next day's class. Most days I will provide a recommendation about what you should think about. Your responses should be 2-4 sentences, and please put them in the body of the email. Each class, we will discuss some of these reading questions. You have two "free" reading questions that you do not need to submit over the course of the quarter. However, if you do choose to take advantage of this, please send me an email noting that you are using your "free" question that day.

3. 15%: 3-page short writing assignment: A 3 page short writing assignment, double-spaced. In this writing assignment, I will give you a selection of excerpts from the Apology and the Crito. You will be asked to pick one excerpt, identify what conclusion the author is trying to establish, and identify the premises the author uses to support that conclusion. If premises are missing from the argument, do your best to suggest premises on Plato's behalf. Finally, say whether or not you think the author is successful in establishing this conclusion. No introduction or conclusion will be necessary. Further details on this assignment will be distributed in class.
4. 30%: 6-7 page midterm paper: A 6-7 page midterm paper, double spaced, on a topic to be distributed on Canvas. You will be required to meet with me to discuss an outline of your paper.
5. 35%: 6-7 page final paper: A 6-7 page final paper, on your choice of topics to be distributed on Canvas. You will be required to meet with me to discuss an outline of your paper.

Policy Statements:

1. Late Papers and Extensions: For each day that a paper is late, it will be penalized 2/3rds of a letter grade. Late papers will only be accepted up to four days after the assignment is due. For reasons of fairness, extensions will only be granted in cases of clear need. Please contact me as soon as you think that you may need an extension so we can work out an appropriate plan.
2. Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated according to university policy. It is your responsibility to make sure you have turned in a readable pdf for all paper assignments. Microsoft Word documents will not be accepted.
3. Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me or email me by the end of the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential.
4. Laptops: Laptops and tablets will be permitted in class so you can have access to our readings. However, note that electronics use has been shown to decrease class performance (cf. Ravizza et al, "Logged in and Zoned Out," Psychol Sci. 2017 Feb, 28(2):171-180). You should feel free to use a laptop or tablet to look up a section of our reading, but I encourage students to take notes with pencil and paper.

Tentative Schedule, subject to change:

1. 10/1: Introduction. No required reading.
2. 10/3: Plato, Apology
3. 10/8: Plato, Crito and King, Letter from Birmingham Jail
4. 10/10: Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus Optional: Diamond, "Missing the Adventure"
10/14: Short Writing Assignment Due, 5 pm
5. 10/15: Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus
6. 10/17: Plato, Republic 1 and fragment of Phintys of Sparta
7. 10/22: Plato, Republic 2
8. 10/24: Plato, Republic 3
9. 10/29: Plato, Republic 4, and fragment of Aesara of Lucania
10. 10/31: Plato, Republic 5, and review fragment of Phintys of Sparta Optional: Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism"
11. 11/5: Plato, Republic 6
12. 11/7: Plato, Republic 7
13. 11/12: Plato, Republic 8
14. 11/14: Plato, Republic 9
15. 11/19: Plato, Republic 10
16. 11/21: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1
17. 11/26: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 2, 3.6-12 and Hursthouse, A False Doctrine of the Mean
18. 12/3: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 5.13, 10.6-8
TBA: Final Paper due