

# Philosophical Perspectives I

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**Student Hours:** Tuesdays, 9–10:50 am, Stuart 222 (just knock if the door is closed), or Friday, 1–2:50 pm, on Zoom.

**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., Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, 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).

Please use these translations for our class. If purchasing these books involves any hardship, please send me an email and I can try to ehlp.

## Course Requirements:

1. 20%: Participation. Participation in this course has two elements.
  1. I expect everyone to participate regularly in seminar discussion. Attendance is also of course mandatory in both class and writing seminars, 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. I ask you to complete 3 brief reading responses over the course of the term. Please email me no more than a paragraph raising a question or point about something in our reading. These are due at 9 pm the day before our next class. **Please complete one during weeks 1–3, one during weeks 4–6, and one during weeks 7–9.** It's up to you when to do this.
2. 15%: 3-page short writing assignment: A 2–3 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.

3. 30%: 5–6 page midterm paper: A 5–6 page midterm paper, double spaced, on your choice of topics to be distributed on Canvas. You will be required to come to student hours to discuss your paper.
4. 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 come to student hours to discuss 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.
5. COVID: Unfortunately, the University of Chicago has refused to decide on a general set of policies to manage COVID cases and quarantining in our classrooms. This means that all your classes will have a patchwork of different policies, chosen by people who are not experts! Tentatively, I intend to approach it in the following way: Per university policy, mask-wearing is required. I will hold a mixture of online and offline office hours, but may move them all online if that seems wise. If you are quarantining, I will do my best to set up an option for you to join class remotely; if you are sick, you are not obligated to join us live. If a critical mass of us have to quarantine, or if I have to quarantine, the class will move online for a one-week period.

### **Tentative Schedule:**

1. 9/28: Introduction. No required reading.
2. 9/30: Plato, Apology
3. 10/5: Plato, Crito and King, Letter from Birmingham Jail

4. 10/7: Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus Optional: Diamond, "Missing the Adventure"

**10/11: First Writing Assignment Due, 5 pm**

5. 10/12: Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus
6. 10/14: Plato, Republic 1 and fragment of Phintys of Sparta
7. 10/19: Plato, Republic 2
8. 10/21: Plato, Republic 3
9. 10/26: Plato, Republic 4, and fragment of Aesara of Lucania
10. 10/28: Plato, Republic 5, and review fragment of Phintys of Sparta Optional: Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism"
11. 11/2: Plato, Republic 6
12. 11/4: Plato, Republic 7

**11/8: Second Writing Assignment Due, 5 pm**

13. 11/9: Plato, Republic 8
14. 11/11: Plato, Republic 9 and Wamba-dia-Wamba, "Experiences of Democracy in Africa"
15. 11/16: Plato, Republic 10 and Plato, Phaedo, 74-76
16. 11/18: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1
17. 11/30: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 2, 3.6-12 and Hursthouse, A False Doctrine of the Mean
18. 12/2: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 5.13, 10.6-8

**12/8: Third Writing Assignment Due, 5 pm**