

**PHHS4020 Plato**  
**Fall Semester, 2019**

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This class meets on Fridays, 2:10-5:00 pm, DSPT 3

This is the penultimate syllabus. We will finalize what we will do when the class meets and we discuss your interests and needs.

Description

Reading and discussion of selected dialogues in English translation. Emphasis is on developing a strategy for reading the dialogues based on the contemporary assessment of their literary form and their function within the Academy.

Goals of the Course

In this course you will learn the issues associated with the interpretation of Plato's texts, particularly the dialogue form and the significance of extra-Platonic sources. You will engage Plato's texts through a method that is literary and historical. Using this method you will explore in depth the content of Plato's thought on selected topics. To do this we will read a selection of Plato's dialogues and two secondary sources. The texts selected include many frequently read dialogues but we will read some of the not so familiar dialogues as well.

Format

What I will do: I will prepare some material to introduce the dialogue(s) or book being discussed and sometimes direct our attention to particular passages. I will periodically give presentations or summaries to help us keep the "big picture" of Plato's philosophy in focus.

What you will do: You will read the material we will discuss and come in with one page of written commentary to assist your participation in the discussion. Since this is a seminar, the quality of the class will reflect the quality of your preparation. The details of the course requirements and the class paper are at the end of this syllabus.

Introduction to the Study of Plato

1. The literature of identity: Plato and Homer
2. *Alcibiades* While its authorship is doubtful, it serves as a good introduction to Plato by someone who understood him well.

Socratic Dialogues on Virtue

*Charmides*

*Laches*

*Lysis*

*Hippias Minor*

The Expert Use of Language

*Ion*

*Euthydemus*

*Gorgias*

The Erotic Dialogues

*Phaedrus*

*Symposium*

Rhetoricians, Sophists and Philosophers

Discussion of Andrea Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*

Wealth, Power and Pleasure

*Meno*

*Philebus*

Discussing the One and the Many

*Parmenides*

*Phaedo*

The Significance of Platonic Myth

Discussion of Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*

Knowledge

*Theaetetus*

Plato's Cosmology

*Timaeus*

Metaphysics and Protology

*Republic*

### Course Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion are expected.
2. For each class, prepare one written page of reflection on the readings for the class. This may focus on a passage that you found particularly enlightening or challenging, on the dialogue as a whole, on the relationship between the dialogues being discussed, or anything that will assist us to engage the text.
3. A paper of about twenty pages on a topic of your choice. A proposal and preliminary bibliography are due the class after reading week.

#### Some suggestions

Plato's Theology

Some aspect of the interpretative tradition e.g. a comparison of the methods and conclusions of two Plato scholars

The Significance of Eros

The Function of Myth in the Dialogues

Plato's Understanding of the Human Soul

### Required Texts

The prices listed below are for Amazon Prime. Less expensive options are available.

John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997, ISBN: 0-87220-349-2 \$49.99

Andrea Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, ISBN: 0-521-77433-0 \$34.40

Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998, ISBN: 0-226-07519-2 \$33.00