

**DREXEL UNIVERSITY
PHIL 481-001: PLATO
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PROFESSOR

M. G. Piety, B.A. Philosophy, Earlham College, 1984; M.A. Philosophy, Bryn Mawr College, 1987; Ph.D. Philosophy, McGill University, 1995. Lecturer, Philosophy of Religion, McGill, 1990. Fulbright Fellow, Denmark, 1990-91. Visiting Scholar, Department of Søren Kierkegaard Research, University of Copenhagen, 1990-1998.

Professor Piety's Ph.D. dissertation is on Kierkegaard's epistemology. She has published articles on Kierkegaard in philosophical and popular journals as well as in books on Kierkegaard and on the philosophy of religion. She has lectured on philosophy in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Denmark and Norway.

Professor Piety has long had an interest in Plato and is currently working on a book entitled *The Wisdom of Plato's Republic*. She studied ancient Greek with the renowned classical scholar [Mabel Lang](#), and Plato with the renowned Plato scholar [Alexander Nehamas](#) as a graduate student at Bryn Mawr College (Nehamas was then teaching at the University of Pennsylvania where Bryn Mawr graduate students frequently took graduate philosophy courses).

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Republic of Plato. This text is available from free on line at this address: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>. It is also readily available in various editions in almost any used bookstore. You will need to buy a copy even if you want to read the online version because the online version is missing the Stephanus numbers (marginal numbers that identify where a passage is in the dialogue) and you will need those numbers for your essays. Allan Bloom's translation is preferred by many scholars. It doesn't matter, though, what edition you use because the Stephanus numbers are the same for all editions. If there is no good used bookstore near you, try abebooks.com. They have lots of copies of the *Republic* at very reasonable prices. Make sure you read the description of the condition of a particular book though before you buy it. You don't want to end up with a copy that had someone else's highlighting and notes all through it.

The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic, ed. G.R.F. Ferrari (Cambridge, 2007).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Probably more people alive today have read the Republic than any other single work of philosophy. It is the first, or the earliest surviving, systematic utopia in Europe's history. It also contains the first theory of psychology, the first examination of the origins of government, the first proposal for educational reform, and the first theoretical esthetics.

... The Republic is a classic Platonic dialogue. It contains the fullest exposition of the doctrines traditionally associated with his name: the theory of Forms, the parts of the soul, the condemnation of poetry, and, of course, the uncompromising recommendations for political change.

--Nickolas Pappas, Plato and the Republic

Plato is considered by many to be the father of Western philosophy and the *Republic* is considered to be the most important of his works. We will read all ten books of the *Republic* and discuss each one in detail. We will examine the various doctrines presented in the work and the development of the individual arguments. We will also look at the book's dialogue form its significance. Because this is an upper-level seminar course, we will read not only the *Republic* itself, but also what other scholars have written on these issue we will be examining. Finally, we will discuss what we take to be the main argument of the work.

The *Republic* is one of the most stimulating and interesting works in the history of philosophy. It is so fascinating, in fact, that scholars still struggle to figure out what it was that Plato was trying to say with the work. "In the ocean of the Republic," writes G.R.F. Ferrari in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, "there is room for all to swim" (xix).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed to introduce students to philosophy through the use of a single work that is considered by many to be the greatest work in the history of philosophy. Plato's *Republic* touches on all the major areas of philosophy, from epistemology (the study of knowledge), to ethics, to social and political philosophy. All these topics are woven together in the treatment of human beings as social animals.

- A basic understanding of the foundations of the Western philosophical tradition.
- A firm grasp of the basic areas of philosophy, such as epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, social and political philosophy.
- An understand the complexities of human nature and how these complicate social and political relations and the project of designing the ideal form of government.
- An understanding of the structure of a typical short philosophical essay.
- An ability to write a short philosophical essay in 50 minutes.
- An increased level of reflection on the complexities of human existence.
- A basic familiarity with the views of some of the most prominent Plato scholars on the

Republic.

This course forms an important part of the philosophy curriculum. It is also recommended, however, for students in any humanities major and will be of particular interest to those majoring in political science.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Participation----30% (includes attendance, participation in class discussions and miscellaneous homework assignments).

B. Essay papers-----45% (10%, 15% and 20%)

D. Final Exam Essay-----25%

Essay Grading scale:

90-100 = A	75-79 = B	60-64 = C	45-49 = D
85-89 = A-	70-74 = B-	55-59 = C-	0-45 = F
80-84 = B+	65-69 = C+	50-54 = D+	

Point breakdown for essay grades

Introduction–	20
Background–	20
Argument–	30
Conclusion–	10
Style–	20

Total– 100

A. Class Participation.

Students must complete the first half of the reading assigned for each week by Monday of that week, and the second half of the reading by Friday. Participation includes attendance, active involvement in class discussions, and time spent individually with the instructor. This course will be run as a seminar course and students will be graded on both the quality and than the quantity of their contribution to the discussion.

Students may use computers in class since many will be using the online version of the *Republic*. They may not, however, use earphones/buds. Any student using earphones/buds will simply be counted as absent for that day. Also, if I direct a discussion question to a student who is using a computer and the student cannot answer the question without my having to repeat it, I will assume that the student had not been using the computer to follow the text and her or she will be counted as absent for that day.

Class discussions are absolutely vital to all philosophy courses because philosophy is essentially training in how to think rather than rote memorization of data, and much of that training comes about through participation in class discussions. More than three unexcused absences (including those described above in connection with the use of computers in class) will thus result in a 0/F for participation. More than five unexcused absences (including those described above) will result in an F for the course.

B. Essays.

There will be three in-class essay papers during the term. Each paper should be approximately 400-600 words (i.e., 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages). The most important criteria used in the evaluation of the papers will be clarity and coherence. A clear, well-written essay will receive a better grade than a confusing, incoherent, but highly original paper. The highest marks, however, will go to papers that are clear, coherent and original. Some of the comments on the graded essays will appear only as numbers. Students should refer to the "Key to Comments" at the end of the syllabus for information about what these numbers mean.

Students may rewrite the first essay (but only the first essay) to improve their grade. Students are encouraged to do this because skills gained as a result of rewriting the essay will help to ensure better grades on later essays, and students who rewrite this essay will receive participation credit for their efforts. Rewrites must be submitted, however, no later than seven days (including weekends) after the original version was returned. Rewrites must incorporate *substantial*, rather than merely stylistic, improvements on the original version if they are to result in an elevated grade. Students should also be aware that if their rewrites do not incorporate such improvements not only will their grade on the paper not be raised, they will receive no participation credit for the rewrite.

Students are responsible for establishing, by the ninth week of the term, whether they have failed to submit any of the required assignments. No credit will be given for work submitted after the tenth week of the term.

C. Final Exam Essay

There will be a final exam in the form of an essay on a topic the student selects from a list provided by the professor. Students may also choose to rewrite one of their earlier essays (including the first essay even if they already rewrote that essay) for their final-exam essay.

READING, WRITING, AND COMPUTING: WHERE TO GET HELP

A. Reading Skills

Philosophical writing is often difficult, so students must be sure they allow enough time to complete each reading before the class for which it has been assigned. Although technical terms peculiar to philosophy will be explained by the instructor, students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the meanings of new terms and concepts encountered in the readings. Every student should own a comprehensive collegiate dictionary such as *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* or *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. In addition, there are several very good encyclopedias and dictionaries of philosophy. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Vols. I-VIII) edited by Paul Edwards is the standard. One of the best dictionaries of philosophy is *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1994), but there are several others. The online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>) is also an excellent resource. www.epistemelinks.com is an excellent philosophy web site with links to hundreds of other philosophy sites. Finally, the instructor is always available via email and office hours to assist students in clarifying any terms, concepts, ideas or arguments that are initially opaque and confusing.

B. Writing Skills

Students who wish help in developing their writing skills should visit the Drexel Writing Center. The people at the Writing Center are experts in elucidating the analytical skills that can help you organize and develop your ideas. They are trained in explaining, among other things, the structuring outlining, developmental sequencing, and presentation of written summaries, argumentative essays and research papers. If you are insecure about your writing skills, please visit the Writing Center before handing in any written work assigned in this course.

C. Computing Skills

Help with technical computer problems, or problems relating to Blackboard, is available from the Information Desk in the Korman Center. Please do not request help from the instructor. She is not an expert in either computers or Blackboard.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See Drexel's Academic Integrity, Plagiarism and Cheating Policy: http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp and procedures related to academic integrity complaints <http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/judicial/honesty.html>

POLICY RELATING TO LATE SUBMISSIONS

A request for an extension beyond any assignment due date must be made via e-mail, with supporting reasons, at least 72 hours prior to the due date. Unexcused late submissions will result in the depreciation of 1/3 of a grade for every day the paper is late. Failure to submit an assignment by the end of the tenth week will result in an "F" for that assignment.

COURSE DROP POLICY

Drexel's official course drop policy may be found at: http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities should consult the relevant Drexel policy: <http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/>

Key to Comments on Papers for M.G. Piety's Courses:

1. Add a sentence explaining what you are going to do in the rest of the paper.
2. Define term(s), explain who this person/what this thing, is.
3. Develop this point in more detail.
4. I don't understand this.
5. You are repeating yourself.
6. Awkwardly worded. Try rewording this to make it clearer.
7. This is not a complete reference/you need a reference here.
8. This is too vague. You need to be more specific.
9. It is not clear how this is supposed to be relevant.
10. Don't forget to proofread your paper.
11. This reads like a direct quotation. If it is, you need to put it in quotation marks and include a reference for it.
12. Can you give an example to illustrate this point?
13. You are begging the question.
14. You need to produce some evidence to support this.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: Introduction and Book One

Homework: _____

WEEK TWO: Book Two, and “Wise Guys and Smart Alecks in *Republic* 1 and 2,” pp. 90-115 of the *Cambridge Companion*. **Students select their topics for the first essay.**

Homework: _____

WEEK THREE: Book Three. **The first essay is due.**

Homework: _____

WEEK FOUR: Book Four, and “The Noble Lie,” pp. 138-164 of the *Cambridge Companion*. The first essay will be returned. **Students select their topics for the second essay.**

Homework: _____

WEEK FIVE: Book Five. Students select an essay from *Cambridge Companion* to read for Week 6. **The second essay is due.**

Homework: _____

WEEK SIX: Book Six and essay from the *Cambridge Companion*. The second essay will be returned. **Students select their topics for the third essay.**

Homework: _____

WEEK SEVEN: Book Seven. **The third essay is due.** Students select an essay to read for week eight.

Homework: _____

WEEK EIGHT: Book Eight and essay from the *Cambridge Companion*. Students select an essay from the *Cambridge Companion* to read for Week 9. The third essay is returned.

Homework: _____

WEEK NINE: Book Nine and essay from the *Cambridge Companion*. Students select an essay from the *Cambridge Companion* to read for Week 10.

Homework: _____

WEEK TEN: Book Ten and essay from the *Cambridge Companion*.

Homework: _____