

Ancient Greek Philosophy

temporary syllabus

Class

TTH 02:30–03:55 PT on Zoom
(Meeting ID on Canvas)

Office Hours

after class on Zoom

Prerequisites

This is a freshman class. No special prerequisites are required.

Description

Ancient Greek philosophy is not only the root of philosophy but of science in general. One of the most influential texts of this time is Plato's *Republic*, in which Plato gives his views on almost all aspects of philosophical inquiry from metaphysics to political philosophy. The *Republic* is still one of the best introductions to ancient philosophy, and it is surprisingly accessible, also because it is written as a dialogue. We will be reading this text in detail and apply Plato's thought to current problems in philosophy.

Goals

- To connect ancient philosophy with current problems.
- To criticize and defend different views of justice.
- To criticize and defend different structures of society.
- To understand Plato's views of epistemology.
- To understand Plato's views of metaphysics.

Required Reading

(PLEASE BUY, OR GET AN ONLINE VERSION FROM THE LIBRARY, IF AVAILABLE)

Plato. (2008). *Republic*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford University Press.

Course Website

There is a Canvas site for this class, and we will be using the full functionality that Canvas offers.

Lectures and Privacy Policy

All lectures will take place on Zoom. The lectures will be recorded and posted on Canvas. It is not allowed to distribute these recordings in any form, nor is it allowed that you store these videos or parts of these videos after this term has ended. Recorded lectures are only intended for the use of registered students in this class. Please respect this privacy policy!

This is an excerpt of the [Caltech Online Guidelines](#):

In an online learning environment, students must respect the privacy of their classmates and not share personal information about other students beyond the online classroom. Students must not share class recordings, transcripts, or links to lectures and discussion sessions with anyone who is not enrolled in the class, or teaching or supporting the class. While each student enrolled in a course should have access to all course materials and learning options, they should also remember they have an ethical responsibility as members of the Caltech community to keep this information private. Violations of these expectations may be considered violations of the Honor Code and of the Caltech Code of Conduct.

Attendance

Attendance of the online lectures is required, and any absence needs to be communicated to the instructor in advance. 2 excused absences without penalty are permitted, when communicated in advance. Any absences beyond 2 would be unexcused and result in a reduced grade in the category *Attendance and Discussion* (see the grading policy below). More than 4 total absences (including excused ones!) will result in a failing grade for this class. *I encourage you to turn on your cameras during the online lectures!*

Communication

I will stay on Zoom after every class to answer your questions. You can also use the messaging function on Canvas or write me an email.

Assignments

There are four types of assignments for this class:

Short Essay

You have to complete a short essay in the first two weeks of 600–800 words (including footnotes, excluding references). Further reading for the short essay is found on the paper topic sheet uploaded on Canvas.

Papers

You have to complete two papers of 1,200–1,500 words (including footnotes, excluding references and abstract). Further reading for the papers is found on the paper topic sheet uploaded on Canvas.

Worksheets

There will be weekly worksheets distributed, which consists of questions on the current topic (there won't be a worksheet on the weeks before the two papers are due). The worksheets are supposed to help you to actively engage with the reading. Answers should be written in whole sentences and uploaded on Canvas.

Discussion

Every Tuesday at the start of class, there will be a 40 min Socratic discussion session about the big picture and ideas of the previous week. At the beginning, I will pose one or two open-ended questions based on the main themes of the content we will discuss. The goal is to allow open dialogue to share ideas, interpretations, and challenge questions.

Grading

This class will be graded by letters or P/F, and it is designated as 3-0-6. So you are to work at most around 6 hours per week at home. If you significantly exceed this workload to finish the assignments, please let me know. Assignments are graded in the following way:

Short Essay and Papers (50%, 2-3 hrs/week)

The completed essay and papers need to be uploaded on Canvas (see the deadlines in the schedule below). An F in the short essay or in one of the papers means failing the class. You need to attend a writing workshop at the Hixon Writing Center one or two weeks before due date of each of the two papers to work on your complete draft.

Worksheets (30%, 2-3 hrs/week)

The worksheets will be distributed on Wednesday by noon and are due the following Tuesday before class at 9:00 am PT. More than two Fs lead to fail the class.

Attendance and Discussion (20%)

Your attendance in online classes and your participation in the Socratic discussions will be evaluated. For the attendance requirements, see the Attendance policy above. Criteria for the discussion are: (i) responding to questions (also cold calling) and peers' ideas, (ii) offering new questions or interpretations, and (iii) citing from our readings that furthers the discussion to achieve a deeper understanding of the week's topics.

If you take this course P/F, you need to achieve an overall grade of D or better to pass, and every category above needs to be graded D or better as well.

Late Policy

All assignments must be completed and submitted on time in order to avoid penalty. If support or an extension is needed, you must write me an email at least 48 hours in advance. Extensions will be granted on a case-to-case basis and result in a penalty. Any unexcused late submission will not be accepted and will receive an F.

Groups and Collaboration Policy

Throughout the term, you will be assigned a group of 2 to 4 students. *You are supposed to form a group by January 19.* The purpose of the group is twofold:

1. *You are supposed to work together on the short essay and the two papers (not on the worksheets).*

The submitted essay and the papers must be your own work and not copied from your peers. The worksheets, on the other hand, ought to be completed by yourself alone. Please don't share your answers with fellow students. Whenever you refer to literature, cite the reference as precisely as possible. If I discover that you plagiarized, I will report this incident to the Board of Control for review. This may lead you to fail the entire course. For further details, please consult the [Caltech Plagiarism Guidelines](#).

2. *You need to make two group appointments with the Hixon Writing Center.*

One appointment is required to discuss your draft before submission. The Writing Center will send me a report on your discussion and your progress of the paper. Your paper will not be accepted for submission without such appointment.

The Hixon Writing Center

The Writing Specialists at the Hixon Writing Center will continue to offer one-to-one support for writers during the fall quarter. They will offer live, synchronous appointments, with an option for asynchronous consultations for students outside the Americas or with technical difficulties. Students will make individual appointments with their staff by logging into the "Writing Center Scheduling" application via Access (under Academic Services).

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with Caltech Accessibility Services for Students (CASS). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact CASS as soon as possible, since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. Please contact Dr. Lesley Nye, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Students (administrative contact: Beth Larranaga).

Honor Code

While many of you will be working at a distance from Caltech, you remain members of the Caltech community, and the [Caltech Honor Code](#) still applies: "No member of the Caltech community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community." Students should be thoughtful and deliberate as they adjust their work habits and collaborative practices to an online learning environment.

Schedule

The complete schedule will be available on the first day of class.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Notes
1	Jan. 5			
	Jan. 7			
2	Jan. 12			
	Jan. 14			
3	Jan. 19			short essay due groups formed
	Jan. 21			
4	Jan. 26	<i>Guest Lecture</i> Prof. Richard Wolff Plato and Marx		
	Jan. 28			
5	Feb. 2			
	Feb. 4			

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Notes
6	Feb. 9			essay draft due & appointment with HWC
	Feb. 11			
7	Feb. 16			1 st paper due
	Feb. 18			
8	Feb. 23			
	Feb. 25			
9	Mar. 2			
	Mar. 4			
10	Mar. 9			essay draft due & appointment with HWC
11	Mar. 16	no class		2 nd paper due

*These sessions will start with a 40 minutes Socratic discussion.

References

(WILL BE UPLOADED ON CANVAS)

During the term, we may read further texts on particular subjects of the Republic. Additional readings for the papers will be posted on the paper assignment sheet.