

## **PHIL GU4080**

**Modality: ONLINE**

**Time: Tuesday 10:10-12pm, Spring 2021**

**Office hours: TBD**

**Credit points: 3**

**Instructor: Katja Maria Vogt, kv2101@columbia.edu**

**TA: Margaret Corn, mlc2250@columbia.edu**

## **PLATO [PRELIMINARY]**

### **1. Welcome to the Online-Version of GU4080 Plato**

#### *Modality*

For the Spring of 2021, a lot of thought has gone into designing this new class for remote teaching, including components that did not exist pre-Covid.

#### *Synchronous Learning*

Synchronous class time will focus on discussion. Students are expected to take active roles.

#### *Asynchronous Learning: Mini Lectures + Handouts*

For every lesson, you're expected to do three things on your own time, asynchronously:

- read the primary text closely,
- work through the handouts,
- watch two or three short videos (“mini lectures”).

#### *Mini Lectures*

- Most short videos are recorded by the instructor and available well ahead of time.
- All videos lay out puzzles or disputed issues, suitable as topics for short papers.
- PhD students have the option to produce a 4-6 minute video on a topic of their choice.
- PhD students who recorded a video lead a 30-minute discussion on the topic of their video.

#### *Zoom Etiquette*

Please “be there”—video switched on—as much as you can. Sometimes there's reason to switch off the video, for example, when one's internet connection isn't working well. But as far as possible, your fellow students should be able to see you and you see them.

### **2. Course description**

The course offers an advanced introduction to key themes in Plato's philosophy. It is open to undergraduate and graduate students. At the end of the semester, students will have the tools and preparation to think independently and critically about Plato's philosophy. The course covers three texts that, according to standard relative chronology of Plato's dialogues, are considered early, middle, and late: the *Protagoras*, the *Phaedo*, the *Sophist*.

The *Protagoras* introduces themes that we pursue throughout the semester. How does one become a good person? What is the role of pleasure and pain in a well-lived human life? Socrates

advances a famous proposal, the so-called unity of the virtues: for someone to have one virtue such as justice or courage, she needs to have all the virtues. The question of how one becomes a good person involves a metaphysical distinction between being and becoming. Presumably, we can only *become* good, but we can never *be* good.

The *Phaedo* examines four arguments for the soul's immortality. None of these arguments is presented as conclusive. And yet, Socrates trusts that the soul is immortal and this commitment informs his stance toward his own death. This theme is personal for Socrates, who is awaiting his death penalty. But it involves perennial questions in metaphysics and the philosophy of mind. What is the relation between body and soul? Are perception, pleasure, and pain bodily? Is our own mind the cause of our actions? What, if anything, is the role of mind—*nous*—in the cosmos? And what is the role of the Forms?

Plato's *Sophist* belongs to a group of late dialogues that explore, fine-tune, and problematize Plato's earlier proposals, specifically with respect to the Forms, the notions of being and not-being, and the distinction between true and false statements. The interlocutors set out to define sophistry, using a definitional method that Plato develops in several late dialogues. This method is the ancestor of a powerful but contested scientific tool: the division of things into kinds. Finally, we use the *Sophist* to ask general questions about Plato's dialogues. Why does Plato write dialogues, rather than treatises? What is philosophically distinctive about his method?

### 3. Readings

*Plato's Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper, Hackett 1997.

Each seminar session is devoted to a section of primary text combined with one recommended secondary reading. Additional secondary readings are listed in the week-by-week schedule below.

Recommended introductory articles on *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

Richard Kraut, Plato <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>>

Dorothea Frede, Plato's Ethics <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics/>>

Allan Silverman, Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-metaphysics/>>

Mary-Louise Gill, Method and Metaphysics in Plato's *Statesman* and *Sophist* <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-sophstate/>>

The seminar includes 2 meetings of the *Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy*, an author-meets-critics series devoted to the discussion of recent or forthcoming publications. Students are expected to read pre-circulated drafts of papers prior to the session. Information about the program for 2020/21 is here <<https://katjavogt.github.io/workshop-in-ancient-and-contemporary-philosophy/>>.

#### **4. Week-by-Week Plan**

##### ***Week 1, January 12: General Introduction and Introduction to Themes in the Protagoras***

Primary reading: *Protagoras* 309a-324b

Optional secondary readings: Rachel Barney, "The Sophistic Movement," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Mary-Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin, Blackwell 2006; Barbara Herman, *Moral Literacy*, Harvard University Press 2008; Emily Hulme-Kozey, "Another *Peri-Technes* Literature," *Greece & Rome* 65.2 (2018): 205-216; Paul Woodruff, "Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge," in Stephen Everson, *Epistemology* CUP 1990.

##### ***Week 2, January 19: The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras***

Primary Reading: *Protagoras* 324c-334c

Secondary Reading: Gregory Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the *Protagoras*," *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1972): 415-458.

Optional Secondary Readings: Daniel T. Devereux, "The Unity of the Virtues in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Laches*," *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 101, No. 4 (Oct., 1992): 765-789; T.C. Brickhouse and N.D. Smith, "Socrates and the unity of the Virtues," *The Journal of Ethics*, 1 (1997): 311-324; John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *Monist* 62 (1979): 331-50; Susan Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues," *Ratio* (2007); Katja Maria Vogt, "The Virtues and Happiness in Stoic Ethics," in: Chris Bobonich (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 183-199.

##### ***Week 3, January 26: Being and Becoming in the Protagoras***

Primary Reading: *Protagoras* 334d-350e

Secondary Reading: Michael Frede, "Being and Becoming in Plato," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (1988).

Optional Secondary Reading: Andrew Ford, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time (432 BC): Text, interpretation and memory in Plato's *Protagoras*," *Poetica* Vol. 46, No. 1/2 (2014): 17-39; Dorothea Frede, "The Impossibility of Perfection: Socrates' Criticism of Simonides' Poem in the *Protagoras*," *Review of Metaphysics* 39.4 (1986): 729-753.

##### ***Week 4, February 2: Pleasure and Pain in the Protagoras***

Primary Reading: *Protagoras* 351-362a

Secondary Readings: Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (OUP, 1984), 326-329.

Optional Secondary Readings: Christopher Bobonich, "Plato on Akrasia and Knowing Your Own Mind," In Christopher Bobonich & Pierre Destrée (eds.), *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*. Brill. pp. 41-60 (2007); Jessica Moss, "Hedonism and the Divided Soul in the *Protagoras*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*.

##### ***Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy***

##### ***February 9: Knowledge and the Good life in Plato's Protagoras***

Guest speaker: Natalie Hannan, Columbia University and University of Rochester

Commentators: Abigail Breuker, Columbia; Jessica Moss, NYU

Assigned reading: "Epistêmê and the Good Life in Plato's *Protagoras*"

##### ***Week 5, February 16: Recollection in the Phaedo***

Primary Reading: *Phaedo* 57a-78a

Secondary Readings: Hendrik Lorenz, 5-page selection on Plato's *Phaedo* from "Ancient Theories of Soul," <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/#3.1>> (2009); Alex Long and David Sedley, "Introduction," xxiii-xxx, *Plato: Meno and Phaedo*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, 2011.

Optional Secondary Reading: Iakovos Vasiliou, "Plato, Socrates, and Love," *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Love*, edited by Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts (OUP, 2019); David Lewis, "Survival and Identity," in Lewis, *Philosophical Papers Vol I* (OUP, 1983).

**Week 6, February 23: The Soul's Affinity to the Forms in the Phaedo**

Primary Reading: *Phaedo* 78b-91d

Secondary Reading: David Ebrey, "The Asceticism of the *Phaedo*: Pleasure, Purification, and the Soul's Proper Activity," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 99 (2017): 1-30.

Optional Secondary Readings: Myles Burnyeat, "Eikôs Mythos," *Rizai* 2 (2005): 143-165; David Sedley, "Form-Particular Resemblance in Plato's *Phaedo*," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106 (2006): 311-327.

SPRING BREAK

**Week 7, March 9: Agency and Causation in the Phaedo**

Primary Reading: *Phaedo* 91d-102a

Secondary Reading: Iakovos Vasiliou, "Mixing Minds: Anaxagoras and Plato's *Phaedo*" Forthcoming in C. Harry and J. Habash (eds.), *The Reception of Presocratic Natural Philosophy in Later Classical Thought*, Brill.

Optional Secondary Readings: Michael Frede, "The Original Notion of Cause" (1980), in: Frede (1996): *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 125-150; David Sedley, "Platonic Causes," *Phronesis* 43 (1998).

**Week 8, March 16: Forms and Immortality in the Phaedo**

Primary Reading: *Phaedo* 101b-118a

Secondary Reading: Alexander Nehamas, "Predication and Forms of Opposites in the *Phaedo*," *Review of Metaphysics* (1973): 461-491; Sedley and Long, "Introduction," in *Plato: Meno and Phaedo*, CUP 2011, p.xxxi-xxxiii.

Optional Secondary Readings: Sean Kelsey, "Causation in the *Phaedo*," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004): 21-43; David Sedley, "Platonic Causes," *Phronesis* 43 (1998)

**Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy**

**March 23: Platonic Dualism?**

Guest speaker: Suzanne Obdrzalek, Claremont McKenna College

Commentators: Qian Cao, Columbia; Anthony Hejduk, Columbia

**Week 9, March 30: The Definitional Method of the Sophist**

Primary Reading: *Sophist* 216-242a

Secondary Reading: Michael Frede, 1996, "The Literary Form of the *Sophist*," in *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, C. Gill and M. M. McCabe (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 135-51.

Optional Secondary Readings: Mary Louise Gill, "Introduction," in Gill, *Philosophos: Plato's Missing Dialogue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; Lesley Brown, "Definition and Division in Plato's *Sophist*," 2010; Mary Louise Gill, "Division and Definition in Plato's *Sophist*

and *Statesman*,” in *Definition in Greek Philosophy*, D. Charles (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 172-99.

### ***Week 10, April 6: Being in the Sophist***

Primary Reading: *Sophist* 242b-254a

Secondary Reading: G. E. L. Owen, “Plato on Not-being,” in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato*, vol. i.: *Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Doubleday, 1971), reprinted in Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (Duckworth, 1986).

Optional Secondary Readings: Paolo Crivelli, “Introduction,” and “Puzzles about Being,” in Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Fiona Leigh, “Being and Power in Plato’s *Sophist*,” *Apeiron* (2010): 63-85.

### ***Week 11, April 13: Truth and Falsity in the Sophist***

Primary Reading: *Sophist* 253b-268d

Secondary Reading: Paolo Crivelli, “Plato’s Philosophy of Language,” in ed. Gail Fine, *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, OUP 2008.

Optional Secondary Reading: Michael Frede, 1992, “Plato’s *Sophist* on False Statements,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, R. Kraut (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 397-424; Christine Thomas, “Speaking of Something: Plato’s *Sophist* and Plato’s Beard,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 38 (2008): 631-67.

## **5. Requirements**

### **5.1. Undergraduate Students**

#### ***Participation***

In-class participation, discussion posts, and similar contributions (for example, discussions in group office hours held by the TA or the instructor) jointly count for **10% of the grade**.

#### ***Presentation Option***

Two or three students jointly prepare a 5-minute presentation, followed by 15 minutes of discussion, so that this segment of class takes up 20 minutes in total. The presentation is delivered by one of the students (or in some way jointly). It introduces one of the topics/passages that comes up on the handout and/or in the mini videos. Jointly taking responsibility for a 20-minute discussion replaces one 1-page assignment and counts for **10% of the grade for everyone in the team, no matter whether you are the presenter**. If you’re not doing a presentation, you must write **four** instead of three outlines (see below), added deadline **March 16, 10% of the grade**.

#### ***Written Work Toward a Term Paper***

##### ***Step One: Outlines***

Undergraduate students must pick portions of the assigned readings for analysis and submit **three 1-page papers**. **Due dates: Jan 26** (1st assignment), **Feb 9** (2nd assignment), **Feb 23** (3rd assignment)—or earlier!

Choose a section of text that, in your view, contains an interesting argument, example, or methodological move. The section should be c. 1-3 Stephanus pages long.<sup>1</sup> Your paper should have two parts, roughly half a page each:

1. A bullet-point outline of what you take to be important steps in the argument/text.
2. Pick two terms that come up in the text and explain how, according to the reading, we should understand these terms (for example, if the notion of virtue comes up, try to explain briefly what, according to this section of text, virtue is).

The point of these assignments is twofold: to prepare for in-class discussion and to practice the kind of reading/analysis that is needed for philosophical engagement with Plato's dialogues.

1-page assignments are single spaced, 350-450 words. They must be submitted through the "Assignment" function on Canvas. Each 1-page assignment counts for **10% of the grade**. In total, the three 1-page assignments count for **30% of the grade**.

### ***Step Two: 5-page paper***

Write a short paper on one of the topics/questions outlined in the mini videos. Work with the skills you acquired while writing the outlines (i.e., start from an outline of the text, explain all technical vocabulary). Your paper should be double-spaced, c. 5 pages, c. 800-1000 words. Due date **March 23**. The paper counts for **25% of the grade**.

### ***Step Three: extended 10-page paper***

You'll receive feedback on your 5-page paper, with input on how to extend it to a 10-page paper. The extension and revision of the paper counts for **25% of the grade**. Due date: **April 13**.

Note: this assignment structure means that all undergrad papers are either on the *Protagoras* or the *Phaedo*. For the most part, this is fine, because the *Sophist* is especially difficult. That said, if you would prefer to write on the *Sophist*, let us know and we'll figure something out.

The rationale for this assignment structure is that I want to give undergrads the opportunity to write a research paper. To that end, you start with an "exercise" (the outlines), turn to a research question (5-page paper), and develop your ideas based on input (10-page paper).

## **5.2. Graduate Students**

One term paper (16-18 pages), or two shorter papers (8-9 pages). Short papers address topics discussed in class or in the mini videos. Deadlines:

**February 16:** Please let me know whether you write two short papers or one longer paper.

**February 23 and April 16:** Deadlines for the two short papers.

**March 30 and April 18:** Deadlines for abstract and full paper for the long paper. If you're writing on the *Sophist*, please let me know and we'll find an arrangement for the deadlines.

---

<sup>1</sup> Plato's dialogues are cited by reference to so-called Stephanus pages, a standard pagination used in all editions of the dialogues, printed at the margins of the text.

Note: For PhD students who contribute mini-videos, the recording replaces one of the short papers. All details by email.

## **6. Academic Integrity and Honor Code**

Please consult Columbia University's policies on academic integrity as well as Columbia's honor code:

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/ccschonorcode>

<http://bulletin.columbia.edu/general-studies/undergraduates/academic-policies/academic-integrity-community-standards/>

Columbia has recently updated policies for academic integrity specifically regarding the context of online learning:

<https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/research/academic-integrity-and-responsible-conduct-research>

These policies explain Columbia University's academic regulations and how you can safeguard the integrity of your original work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the details of what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty. You are expected to confirm to these policies in your academic work. It is important that you understand that academic dishonesty can lead to disciplinary action, including failure in the course and suspension, or even expulsion, from the University.

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

## **7. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with Disability Services. More information on the Disability Services registration process is available online at [www.health.columbia.edu/ods](http://www.health.columbia.edu/ods) and <http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities>. Registered students must present an Accommodation Letter to the professor before an exam or other accommodations can be provided. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion at (212) 854-2388 (Voice/TTY) or by email at [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu).