

The University of Texas at Austin
Government 382M
Unique # 38800
Platonic Political Philosophy
Fall 2010

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Office Hours: Friday 9:00 – 12:00

Course Description

This course will examine the foundations of classical political philosophy through a study of Plato's political psychology. Central to Plato's political psychology – that is, to his account of the deepest human concerns and passions – is his analysis of the nature and power of *eros*. Plato's emphasis on this force in the human soul is a crucial difference between his thought and that of both the preSocratic philosophers of antiquity and the early modern thinkers who shaped the outlook that still prevails in the modern West. In this seminar, we will study Plato's analysis of *eros* by examining the two dialogues he devoted to that theme, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. This course aims to develop the capacity of students for concentrated, in-depth study of Plato's dialogues, which will be approached not just as important moments in the history of political thought but as expressions of a philosophic position that should be examined to see whether it still retains its power and validity.

Required Texts

Plato's Symposium. Translated by Seth Benardete (University of Chicago Press).

Plato's Phaedrus. Translated by James Nichols (Cornell University Press).

Recommended Reading

The standard Greek texts (if you can read Greek)

Platonis Opera, Vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon. Edited by John Burnet.

Related Platonic dialogues

Apology of Socrates
Alcibiades I and II

Protagoras
Republic
Phaedo
Parmenides

Selected secondary works

- Bloom, Allan. *Love and Friendship*. Simon and Shuster, 1994.
- Bruell, Christopher. *On the Socratic Education: An Introduction to the Shorter Platonic Dialogues*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.
- Ferrari, G. R. F. *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Griswold, Charles. *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986.
- Klein, Jacob. *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965.
- Leibowitz, David. *The Ironic Defense of Socrates: Plato's Apology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Lutz, Mark. *Socrates' Education to Virtue: Learning the Love of the Noble*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998.
- Nichols, Mary. *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *The Fragility of Goodness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001 (revised edition).
- Sallis, John. *Being and Logos: The Way of the Platonic Dialogue*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1975
- Sinaiko, Herman. *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato: Dialogue and Dialectic in Phaedrus, Republic, Parmenides*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Stendhal. *On Love*. Various editions.
- Strauss, Leo. *On Plato's Symposium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Requirements and Grading

Seminar Paper: 65%

This 12-15 page analytical essay will be due on Monday, December 6. You should come up with your own topic, but I will be happy to discuss possible topics with you. Late papers will be marked down 10 points for initial lateness, and 5 points for each day of lateness beyond the first. Incompletes will not be granted.

Four papers of 2-3 pages: 20%

For these brief papers, I will offer topics at least seven times during the semester. You are required to write four of them. They will be due at the beginning of class one week after they are assigned. Late papers will not be accepted. I will write brief comments on these papers, but I will not grade them. I will, however, consider the quality of these papers over the course of the semester in determining your final grade.

Class participation: 15%

NOTE: Plus/minus grades will be used in final grading.

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Course Plan

I will give the specific assignments for each week as we go along, but this is a rough schedule:

August 26	<i>Eros</i> and Platonic Political Philosophy <i>Symposium</i> 172a-178a
September 2	Phaedrus' Speech <i>Symposium</i> 178a-180b
September 9	Pausanias' and Eryximachus' Speeches <i>Symposium</i> 180c-188e
September 16	Aristophanes' Speech <i>Symposium</i> 189a-193d

September 23	Agathon's Speech <i>Symposium</i> 194e-197e
September 30	Socrates' Speech, Part I <i>Symposium</i> 198a-204c
October 7	Socrates' Speech, Part II <i>Symposium</i> 204c-209e
October 14	Socrates' Speech, Part III <i>Symposium</i> 209e-212c
October 21	Alcibiades and Socrates <i>Symposium</i> 212c-223d
October 28	The Setting and Questions of the <i>Phaedrus</i> <i>Phaedrus</i> 227a-237b
November 4	Socrates' First Speech <i>Phaedrus</i> 237b-243e
November 11	Socrates' Second Speech, Part I <i>Phaedrus</i> 243c-250c
November 18	Socrates' Second Speech, Part II <i>Phaedrus</i> 250c-257b
December 2	Rhetoric and Writing [if time permits] <i>Phaedrus</i> 257b-end [if time permits]