

Topics in Ancient Philosophy: Plato's *Republic* | PIU33012

Year	Junior Sophister
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	22 (11 x 2-hour lectures)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Professor Vasilis Politis
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Module Outline:

The aim of these seminars is to study Plato's dialogue, *Republic*. This is one of the richest and most rewarding works in philosophy, but it is also long and winding, often difficult to follow the argument of, and very difficult to find one's way around in. Plato's *Republic* poses the questions: What is justice? And is it better to be just or unjust? The emphasis is always on justice/injustice in the sense of the just/unjust person, his or her soul and self, rather than just/unjust actions. One major theme is the debate between Socrates, who argues that the just person is better than the unjust, and Thrasymachus, who argues that the unjust person is clearly the better of the two.

Another major theme is that of the soul: its nature, its structure and what is good and bad for it. For Plato, the soul is basically oneself and one's self. And for Plato, the self is not something we simply possess, it is something we need to work on to possess: we need to work on becoming who we are. Another major theme is Plato's account of what there is (=the theory of essences and Forms + sense-perceptible things) and what knowledge is. The *Republic* contains what may be less major but no less interesting themes: The place of women in society and among the rulers of society. The pathological degeneration of society, and of the self/soul, when things go wrong.

Assessment:

1 Essay (end of module) 50%: 1 Examination (end of module) 50%.

Recommended Reading List:

- Plato: *Republic* (either the translation by Grube, which is in ed. Cooper, *Plato. Complete Works*, or that by Christopher Rowe, which is in the Penguin Books series). There is a vast secondary literature on Plato's *Republic*. We will need to proceed very selectively—also for the sake of concentrating above all on Plato's text itself and avoiding getting bogged down, or unduly influenced, by secondary literature. A selection of secondary literature on Plato's *Republic* will be distributed at the beginning of the course.



- Robb, K. 1986. ‘“Psyche” and “Logos” in the Fragments of Heraclitus: the Origins of the Concept of Soul’, *The Monist* 69(3), 315–351. This very interesting and important paper deals in large part with the concept of the soul in Plato (and Heraclitus); and the concept of soul is central in the *Republic*.
- V. Politis. 2024. ‘Plato on Essences and Forms’, in P. Larsen and V. Politis (eds.), *The Platonic Mind*. Routledge.