

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Philosophy
Course Outline
PHIL100 Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Doug Al-Maini

Class Room:

Office: NH 717

Office Hours: See schedule: <http://people.stfx.ca/dalmaini/Al-Maini/scheduleDA.htm>

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This outline covers only the material that will be covered in the first semester; a separate outline will follow in semester two.

Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with an introduction to the discipline of philosophy. In the history of Western philosophy, a few texts stand out as having played a major role in establishing what philosophy consists in, and the study of these texts serves as an excellent entry into the field. To begin with then, we shall examine one of these texts, Plato's *Republic*. The *Republic* confronts issues in metaphysics, knowledge, logic, value, ethics, art, and politics in a manner both accessible to the beginner and rewarding to the expert. What is the nature of being? Is happiness the most important goal of living? Can we be certain of our opinions? What is beauty? These and other questions like them are discussed in the *Republic*, and they form the backbone of the discipline of philosophy. Further to this, the *Republic* is a text embedded within a culture and a literary tradition, and we shall try to tease out some of the defining features of the text's relationship to that culture and tradition. In looking into the issue of why philosophy arose to prominence with the Greeks, and what this says about the role of philosophy, we can start to provide an answer to the question of why study philosophy today.

You must bring your copy of the *Republic* to each class.

Early in the semester, we will put aside the *Republic* for one week and engage in a sustained analysis of the nature of logic, with the aim of honing our skills in the critical evaluation of ideas and arguments. With increased facility with the process of argumentation, we will then return to the *Republic* in order to give a more in-depth study of the various positions Plato puts forward in it.

**PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO LAPTOP, CELL PHONE, OR HANDHELD
DEVICE USE ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM.**

There are several reasons for this, and I'll mention them on the first day when we go over this outline, but the most important is the impact of these things on learning. Empirical studies are finally starting to roll in and the results are not pretty: usage of electronic devices during class time dramatically decreases learning, both for the primary user of the device and for everyone that sits around that user. Some evidence can be found here:

“Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers”
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254>

Schedule:

Date	Topics	Readings	Assignment (due Monday)
Sept 7	Introduction; the Nature of Justice	Republic bk 1	
Sept 14	Introduction to Logic	Handout	
Sept 21	Utopias	Republic bk 2	
Sept 28	Censorship; The Myth of the Metals	Republic bk 3	1 st paper outline due
Oct 5	The Tri-partite Soul & City	Republic bk 4	
Oct 12	Equality, Eugenics, Philosopher Rulers	Republic bk 5	1 st paper due
Oct 19	The Nature of Philosophy	Republic bk 5-6	
Oct 26	The Forms; 2 Images	Republic bk 6	
Nov 2	The Allegory of the Cave	Republic bk 7	
Nov 9	Constitutional Decay	Republic bk 8	2 nd paper outline due
Nov 16	The Tyrant's Psychology; Happiness	Republic bk 9	
Nov 23	The Immortality of the Soul	Republic bk 10	2 nd paper due

Assignments:

Students are required to complete two essays (25% each), in class work (20% total), and a final exam (30%). Essays are to be a minimum of 1500 words long. Students are obliged to keep a backup copy of each assignment they complete.

Assignment #1:

In his discussion with Thrasymachus Socrates defends the claim that justice is a form of wisdom. If Socrates is right, then it would seem that unwise or ignorant people cannot act justly, but that sounds cruel and counterintuitive. In your essay you must either a) show what is wrong with Socrates' argument supporting the claim that justice is a form of wisdom, or b) show what is wrong with the belief that unwise or ignorant people can be just. IN EITHER CASE your essay must contain an explanation of Socrates' argument supporting his position.

Assignment #2:

Is the city that Socrates is building with Glaucon and Adeimantus a utopia or not? Why?

Final: Worth 30%, check with Registrar for date and time.

Technical Considerations for Written Assignments:

- 1) All written assignments must be typed (black ink, please) and double-spaced on pages with at most 1 inch margins. Please use "Times New Roman" 12 point font and do not justify the right margin. No extra line spaces between paragraphs. Indent the first line of a paragraph. Printing on both sides of a sheet of paper is quite acceptable.
- 2) Please no title pages. Also no "Works Cited" or "Bibliography" pages referring to one work; do bibliographic references in a footnote if you must. Please no enormously large-fonted things like titles, names, dates, course numbers, student numbers, phone numbers, or due dates that take up half a page of space. Your title, name, and student number at the top of the first page is quite sufficient. Please visibly number any multiple-page assignments. If for some reason you must hand in the assignment to the office, please include my name at the top of the assignment as well.
- 3) No duo-tangs, folders, binders, or paperclips. Loose sheets are acceptable.
- 4) Under no circumstances will emailed assignments be accepted. Please hand in your assignments at the start of class on the day they are due.
- 5) The final page of this outline is the evaluation form that will be used in the assessment of your writing. This evaluation form provides the clearest explanation of my requirements for an essay. Please, study it carefully before you write your work.

- 6) The late policy is a deduction of 3% per day that the assignment is handed in late. This course outline lets you know when assignments are due, and you have been given plenty of time to complete them. Consequently last minute excuses for not completing assignments on time will be met with marked skepticism, not to say cynicism.
- 7) Many of the above requirements are arbitrary demands on my part, but they really do facilitate the assessment of your work. Please follow them! Failure to follow these guidelines will impact your mark for organization.
- 8) Plagiarism is completely unacceptable. If you make use of an idea that is not of your own devising, you must cite the source of that idea. Failure to properly cite sources may result from removal from the course and expulsion from the school. Students are obliged to keep a copy of their assignments.

EVALUATION FORM
(Late assignments will not receive comments)

Style:

Grammar: Are the sentences understandable? Are there any spelling mistakes? Is the diction clear and concise? Can the thought behind each sentence easily be grasped?

/10

Organization: Do the ideas logically follow each other, or were they haphazardly strewn together? Is there evidence of the student having constructed an argumentative outline? Is the structure of the argumentation explicitly stated and easily perceived?

/10

Content:

Thesis: Do the assignment give an answer to a question or problem put forward? Is the answer more than a simple “yes” or “no”? Is the answer insightful, being an interpretive idea itself? Is the thesis explicitly stated?

/10

Argument Outline: /10

Arguments: Are there arguments presented in the paper? Are the arguments interesting or banal? Do the arguments explicitly outline broad premises that act as guides to understanding and reveal the unquestioned perspectives adopted in the paper?

/30

Originality: Does the student provide input into the conceptual debates the text engages in? Is there evidence of insight on the student’s part into the topic? Are there any new ideas being explored in the assignment? Is the student able to go beyond ideas raised in class discussion?

/20

Evaluation: Does the student give a fair summation of the ideas contained in the texts used? Are passages from the text cited? Does the use of these ideas meaningfully contribute to the thesis of the essay, or is the use of material a mere addenda to the main arguments of the paper?

/20

TOTAL /100