

**St. Francis Xavier University**  
**Department of Philosophy**  
**Course Outline**  
**PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy**

**Instructor:** Doug Al-Maini

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**Office Hours:** See schedule on departmental website

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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 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 essence of this course. 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 DO NOT USE COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES, OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING CLASS TIME.**

**Schedule:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>
1	Introduction; the Nature of Justice	<i>Republic</i> bk 1
2	Introduction to Logic	Handout
3	Utopias	<i>Republic</i> bk 2
4	Censorship; The Myth of the Metals	<i>Republic</i> bk 3
5	The Tri-partite Soul & City	<i>Republic</i> bk 4
6	Equality, Eugenics, Philosopher Rulers	<i>Republic</i> bk 5
7	The Nature of Philosophy and the Philosopher	<i>Republic</i> bk 5-6
8	The Forms; 2 Images	<i>Republic</i> bk 6
9	The Allegory of the Cave	<i>Republic</i> bk 7
10	Constitutional Decay	<i>Republic</i> bk 8
11	The Tyrant's Psychology; Happiness	<i>Republic</i> bk 9
12	The Immortality of the Soul	<i>Republic</i> bk 10
13	Wrap up	

**Students are obliged to keep a backup copy of each assignment they complete.**

**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. 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, but do remember to number them.
- 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 skepticism.
- 7) Many of the above requirements are somewhat arbitrary demands on my part, but they really do facilitate the assessment of your work. If you do not follow these guidelines, your mark for organization on the evaluation form will be reduced.
- 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.

**Assignment #1 Diagnostic Exercise; worth 20%.**

In book I, Socrates and Polemarchus engage in a sustained discussion of justice. It seems at the close of their talk that Polemarchus is about to announce a definition of justice not susceptible to previous objections, but at that point Thrasymachus forcibly takes over the discussion and moves it in a different direction. What final definition of justice is Polemarchus about to give, and why would it be satisfying to both Polemarchus and Socrates?

**Assignment #2 (worth 25%). Students must hand in a logical outline of their essay 2 weeks before essay is due; use attached template:**

At 457c, Socrates begins the “2<sup>nd</sup> Wave” of criticism with the introduction of legislation concerned with sexuality, abolishing families, and a devious eugenics program. The second half (466-473) of the “2<sup>nd</sup> Wave” is devoted to a discussion of how the guardians should wage war. What is the unifying theme that justifies Socrates collecting all these disparate policies under the same “wave”?

**Assignment #3 (worth 25%). Students must hand in a logical outline, the structure of which is the student’s own devising, 2 weeks in advance:**

In book VIII, Socrates describes the downfall of the Republic, as it passes successively through the stages of timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and finally, tyranny. It has been said that even given the Republic’s analysis, ideal philosophers such as Plato’s Socrates might still find welcome in one of the lesser constitutions. Where (and why), other than in the ideal aristocracy, could the philosopher possibly find welcome?

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

**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

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