PHIL 161a: Plato

Prof. Yourgrau
Rabb 332
Office Hours:
MW 3:00-4:00 pm and by appointment

Description of the course:

This is not a survey class but rather a course devoted to a close examination of key texts of Plato’s in an attempt to come to grips with the living thought of one of the greatest and most influential thinkers of all time. We will explore the relationship of Plato’s thought to Socrates’, as well as Plato’s influence on later thinkers, from Aristotle to Kant, as well as contemporary philosophers. We will examine Plato’s ideas concerning the good, the best political regime, the nature of love and beauty, and the relationship of reality to perfection. Central themes of the course include the following question: What is real? What is the good life? What is the Good (itself)? What, if anything, is the relationship between love and the Good? Where do our ultimate obligations lie? (to ourselves? to our families? to the state? to God?)

We will focus, in order, on the following dialogues: The Apology, The Crito, The Euthyphro, The Phaedo, The Symposium, and The Republic.

Texts:

1) Plato, Five Dialogues (trans. G.M.A. Grube)
2) Plato, The Symposium (trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff)
3) Plato, The Republic (trans. G.M.A. Grube)

There will also be essays by C. Griswold, R. Sharvy, G. Vlastos, and others.

Writing Assignments:
Several short papers (3 - 5 ppg), and a final paper (3 - 5 ppg). Each paper counts for one third of the final grade.

**Learning Goals:**

Students will learn how to interpret and evaluate a Platonic dialogue, and how to relate the dialogues to each other. They will learn how to compare Plato’s thought with Socrates’, and how to evaluate Plato’s ideas in the context of contemporary philosophical thought.

**Note:**

a) No ipads, iPhones, or any such computer related device to be used in class. The only "i" I want to see in class is you.

b) Attendance in class is mandatory. Attendance will be taken. After two unexcused absences, there will be a grade penalty for each additional unexcused absence.

**Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students.** If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodation letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781-736-3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

**If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials,** please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult the university webpage for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Allegations of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university.

**Please note:** This is a Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week) Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).