

PHIL 1002W: Intro to Philosophy

Spring 2025 | Lectures Mon/Wed 9:45 – 11:00 am | Blegen 150

Discussion Section 1: Fri 9:05 – 9:55 am, Blegen 115

Discussion Section 2: Fri 10:10 – 11:00 am, Blegen 225



The Allegory of the Cave

Instructors:

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Course Description: This course introduces philosophy through Plato's monumental work, the *Republic*. We will explore questions such as: Do we have any reason to be just beyond the desire to avoid punishment? What would a perfectly just society look like, and should we strive to create it? What are the most fundamental principles that govern human psychology, and are they compatible with peaceful coexistence with others? What is reality like at its most fundamental level, and how should our knowledge of it influence the way we live? Is democracy truly the best form of government, or is it merely a form of organized chaos? What constitutes the happiest life for an individual and for society as a whole? Does the soul survive the death of the body, and is it even desirable that it does? Finally, can human consciousness be explained by physical science, or does it defy scientific explanation? Plato's answers to these questions will serve merely as a model, helping students explore how they might answer these questions for themselves. Other authors include: Octavia Butler, Angela Davis, John Dewey, Marilyn Frye, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Thich Nhat Hanh, Thomas Nagel, Robert Nozick, B.F. Skinner, and Bernard Williams.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students in the course **can identify, define, and solve problems.**

Addressing the Outcome

In this course, students will grapple with some of the most pressing and enduring issues of philosophy, which have challenged thinkers for thousands of years. A critical examination of Plato's views on justice, human nature, happiness, and democracy will equip students with a framework to systematically develop their own philosophical perspectives.

Assessment of Learning Related to the Outcome

Learning outcomes will be assessed through regular participation in class discussions, interviews with individuals outside the class centered on a philosophical question, and a series of written assignments. These assignments will require students to clearly articulate their own reasoning as well as evaluate and engage with others' perspectives on central philosophical questions.

Required Texts: Students are required to purchase the following book:

- *Republic* by Plato
Translated with Introduction by C.D.C. Reeve
Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004

All other readings will be made available on Canvas.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly Discussion Posts (10 total) 15%
2. Canvas Reading Quizzes (5 total) 15%
3. Public Philosophy Interviews
 - a. First Interview 5%
 - b. Second Interview 5%
4. Critical Essay 20%
5. Written Dialogue 20%
6. General Participation 20%
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Quality of Discussion Posts
 - c. Class Discussion

Major Deadlines:

Discussion Posts	Wednesdays before midnight
Readings Quizzes	See Course Schedule
First Interview	Sat Feb 15 by midnight
Second Interview	Sat Feb 29 by midnight
Critical Essay	Sat March 22 by midnight
Written Dialogue	Tues May 6 by midnight

Description of Requirements

1. Weekly Discussion Posts (15%): Students will be required to write a weekly discussion post (a minimum of one paragraph) that responds to a question posed by the instructor. The purpose of the discussion posts is for students to state as clearly as possible their own answer to the question posed. The question will be relevant to the readings assigned during that week of class, but students are not required to discuss the assigned readings in their discussion post, though they can if they'd

like to. To be clear: the purpose of the discussion posts is for students to state their own opinion – as clearly, thoughtfully, and respectfully as possible – in response to a question related to class.

Students can optionally (and are strongly encouraged to!) write a response – clearly, thoughtfully, and respectfully – to a discussion post written by one of their peers. It is not sufficient to write something like, “I agree with so-and-so, thanks for writing a great post!”; rather, a response must make a substantive contribution to the discussion, and as with an original post be at least one paragraph long. Options include: offering an example that illustrates the idea expressed in the original post, an objection (either one’s own or “playing devil’s advocate”) to the original post, a comparison of the original post with the ideas of some author studied in the course, a further question that the original post brought to mind for you. Be creative!

Students are allowed to skip 2 of the assigned discussion posts. Since 12 discussion posts are assigned, students are required to complete 10 discussion posts throughout the semester.

Points will be deducted from discussion posts that are submitted late without a medical or other formal excuse.

2. Canvas Reading Quizzes (15%): There will be five Reading Quizzes administered via Canvas. These quizzes are multiple-choice format, with 5-10 questions on the material we’ve read and studied in previous weeks. Students will be given the questions (at least) one week before the quiz deadline. The quizzes will open on Monday of the relevant week and will close the following Saturday at midnight.

3. Public Philosophy Interviews (each 5%): Students are required to record two conversations with people outside class centered around questions related to course topics.

4. Critical Essay (20%): Students are required to write a 900 to 1200-word essay that critically engages with one or more views discussed in class.

5. Written Dialogue (20%): Students are required to write a 1500-word dialogue including two or more characters who disagree with one another about a central topic discussed in class.

6. Participation (20%): Discussion is a core component of this class. That is why participation counts for 20% of your course grade. You should come to every class and discussion section prepared to talk about the assigned readings and the course topics. The participation component of your grade will factor in your attendance record as well as the regular completion and quality of your forum posts. Please feel free to check in with your TA at any point in the semester if you are ever concerned about your participation.

Course Schedule

* Schedule is subject to change. * Complete readings prior to class.

Wed Jan 22 Syllabus & Introduction to class

Mon Jan 27 Overview of the Republic

C.D.C. Reeve, “Republic: Introduction & Synopsis” (pp. ix – xxxiii)

Wed Jan 29 Thrasymachus on Why Justice is for Bootlickers

Rep. 336b (p. 12) – 344d (p. 22)

Mon Feb 3 Good boys Glaucon & Adeimantus know justice is peachy... but don’t know why...

Rep. 357a (p. 36) – 367e (p. 45)

Wed Feb 5 Building a Perfectly Just City... from Scratch!

Rep. 367e (p. 45) – 380c (p. 61)

Mon Feb 10 The Noble “Lie”: Culture, Myth, & Happiness in Kallipolis

Rep. 414c (p. 99) – 427d5 (p. 112)

Wed Feb 12 Freedom? ... What’s that?

B.F. Skinner, Selections from *Walden 2* (on Canvas)

Sat Feb 15 – First Interview & Reading Quiz 1 due by midnight

Mon Feb 17 It Takes an Orderly City...

Rep. 427d5 (p. 112) – 434d (p. 121)

Wed Feb 19 ... To Raise an Orderly Soul!

Rep. 434d (p. 121) – 445e (p. 135)

Mon Feb 24 “There is NO SELF”: Self & Soul in Asian Philosophy

Upanishads (selections) (on Canvas)

Dialogue between Nagasena and King Milinda (on Canvas)

Thich Nhat Hanh, “Emptiness as Fullness” (on Canvas)

Wed Feb 26 Philosopher Queens... and Whether Any of this is Remotely Possible

Rep. 449a (p. 136) - 457c (p. 146)

Rep. 471c (p. 164) – 473d5 (p. 166)

Sat March 1 – Second Interview due by midnight

Mon Mar 3 Sexism: A Second Look

Marilyn Frye, “Sexism” (on Canvas)

Wed Mar 5 Sexism: A Second Look
Marilyn Frye, “Sexism” (on Canvas)

Sat March 8 – Reading Quiz 2 due by midnight

Spring Break: Mon March 10 - Fri March 14

Mon Mar 17 *No Class, Extra Office Hour* (for Critical paper)

Wed Mar 19 Race & Incarceration
13th (documentary film shown in class)

Sat March 22 – Critical Paper due by midnight

Mon Mar 24 Prison Abolition as World-building
Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (selections) (on Canvas)

Wed Mar 26 “Nobody’s Free Until Everybody’s Free”
Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (selections) (on Canvas)
NY Times Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore (on Canvas)

Sat March 29 – Reading Quiz 3 due by midnight

Mon Mar 31 An Oldie but a Goodie: The Allegory of the Cave
Rep. 504b (p. 198) – 509c (p. 205)
Rep. 514a (p. 208) – 521a5 (p. 214)

Wed Apr 2 Watch as Democracy precariously teeters between Oligarchy and Tyranny!
Rep. 550c5 (p. 245) – 569c10 (p. 269)

Mon Apr 7 Ideal Democracy & Democratic Ideals
John Dewey, “Democracy is Radical” (on Canvas)
John Dewey, “Creative Democracy” (on Canvas)

Wed Apr 9 The American Dream... or the American Nightmare?
Requiem for the American Dream (documentary film shown in class)

Mon Apr 14 The Best Life is... The Philosopher’s Life Obviously!
Rep. 571a (p. 270) – 580c5 (p.281)
Rep. 583b (p. 284) – 592b5 (p. 296)

Wed Apr 16 Pleasure, Playing God, and the Value of Happiness
Octavia Butler, “The Book of Martha” (on Canvas)
Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (on Canvas)

Saturday April 19 – Reading Quiz 4 due by midnight

Mon Apr 21 The Joy of Living Forever...
Rep. 608c (p. 313) – 621c10 (p. 326)

Wed Apr 23 ... Or why you might get tired of that...
Bernard Williams, “Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality” (on Canvas)

Mon Apr 28 The Mystery of Consciousness via Bats and Zombies
Thomas Nagel, “What is it like to be a bat?” (on Canvas)
David Chalmers, “The Hard Problem of Consciousness” (on Canvas)

Wed Apr 30 *No Class, Extra Office Hour*

Sat May 3 – Reading Quiz 5 due by midnight

Mon May 5 *Optional Class for Final Reflections*

Tues May 6 – Written Dialogue due by midnight

Course Policies

- 1. Late Work:** Unless special permission is obtained in advance, late papers will not be accepted without grade penalty. The penalty for late papers is 5% for every day the paper is submitted past the official deadline. Discussion posts cannot be made up and must be completed on time for credit. Extended deadlines *on paper assignments* are granted liberally *only if they are within one week of the official deadline*, but you *must* receive permission from your TA. Further extensions on papers or discussion posts will require a formal excuse with evidence, such as a medical note or a note from a parent in the case of a family emergency.
- 2. Grading:** Final grades will be calculated as follows.

Letter Grades are translated to the following numerical scores.

A+ = 100	C+ = 78
A = 95	C = 75
A- = 92	C- = 72
B+ = 88	D+ = 68
B = 85	D = 65
B- = 82	F = 50

Final letter grades will be calculated using the following scale.

97-100 = A+	77-79 = C+
93-96 = A	73-76 = C
90-92 = A-	70-72 = C-
87-89 = B+	67-69 = D+
83-86 = B	60-66 = D
80-82 = B-	50 = F

Below is a list of criteria that will be used to evaluate your writing assignments. Note that the %'s only give a *rough* indication of how important these aspects are, and that not all of the criteria will apply equally to each of the different assignments; this is not a mathematical scale. There will be slightly different standards for each of the individual assignments, which I will state when those assignments are announced.

- Quality of ideas (50%)
 - *Range and depth of argument; fair representation of philosopher's position; logic of argument; quality and/or originality of thought; appropriate sense of the complexity of the topic; appropriate awareness of opposing views.*
 - Organization and Argumentation (40%)
 - *Clarity of thesis statement in the introduction; logical and clear arrangement of ideas; effective use of transitions; unity and coherence of paragraphs; good development of arguments through supporting details and evidence.*
 - Clarity, style, and grammar (10%)
 - *Ease of readability; appropriate voice, tone, and style for the assignment; clarity of sentence structure; grammatically correct sentences; accurate spelling; careful proofreading.*
3. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in a final grade of F for the course. If you have any questions about plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, do not hesitate to ask any of your instructors. According to the UMN Student Conduct Code: "Plagiarism shall mean representing the words, creative work, or ideas of another person as one's own without providing proper documentation of source."
4. **ChatGPT:** (TLDR: You are ***not*** allowed to use ChatGPT for this course.) The Board of Regents Student Conduct Code states the following in Section IV, Subd.1: Scholastic Dishonesty:

"Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarism; cheating on assignments or examinations, including the unauthorized use of online learning support and testing platforms; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work, including the posting of student-generated coursework on **online learning support and testing platforms** not approved for the specific course in question; taking, acquiring, or using course materials without faculty permission, including the posting of faculty-provided course materials on online learning and testing platforms; ..."

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, and online assignment help tools, such as Chegg®, are examples of **online learning support platforms**: they can not be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. The following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform;
- Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment;
- Using AI to summarize or contextualize source materials.

If you are in doubt as to whether you are using an online learning support platform appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with one of your instructors.

- 5. Disability Accommodations:** If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) <https://ars.unc.edu/> to arrange confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations. If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your TA early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in this course.
- 6. Sexual Misconduct.** Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and relationship violence) includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such behavior is prohibited in the University setting.

Per the [U of M policy on sexual harassment](#), *I am required to share information that I learn about possible sexual misconduct* with the campus Title IX office. Within the requirements of my job, I will be as responsive as possible to your requests for confidentiality and support. You can also, or alternately, choose to talk with a confidential resource that will not share information that they learn about sexual misconduct. Confidential resources include:

- The Aurora Center 24hr Helpline (612-626-9111)
- Boynton Mental Health (612-624-1444)
- Student Counseling Services (612-624-3323)

7. Other Useful Resources:

- Technology resources for remote learning: <https://it.umn.edu/working-learning-campus/get-internet-access-campus>
- University Policies: <https://policy.umn.edu/>
- Student Writing Support: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/>
- Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.umn.edu/>
- Student Counseling Center: <https://counseling.umn.edu/>
- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu>
- History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps Podcast: <http://historyofphilosophy.net>