

4007G: Development of Plato's Political Philosophy

Department of Philosophy
Winter 2019

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Course Description

In this course we will explore Plato's political philosophy from its origins in Socratic philosophy, through the Republic, and culminating in the Statesman and Laws. Political philosophy as a discipline was invented by Plato. The Platonic corpus as a whole contains reflections on the origins of political institutions, the concepts used to interpret and organize political life, the meaning and value of justice, the relation between the aims of ethics and politics, and the merits of political expertise as an antidote to the power of rhetoric. The course will examine such questions as: What is justice? What are the goals of a just society? What motivates people to act justly? Indeed, why should one be just? Why should I obey the laws of the state, and what are the limits (if any) to my obligation?

authoritarian streak? What form of government is best? How is moral and political reform distributed? How is moral and political reform distributed? How is moral and political reform distributed? How is moral and political reform distributed? How is moral and political reform distributed? What is the happiness of the individual to be subordinated to?

Required Texts

Plato: Complete Works

_____, ed. John Cooper (Hackett Publishing), ISBN: 0872203492.
Available at the UWO Book Store or Amazon.ca.

Course Requirements

Option #1

1. Annotated Bibliography **30%** (8-10 sources accompanied by 100-150 word abstracts, due before Reading Week)
2. Project description **20%** (2 page, well-developed outline of the major paper, including research question, working thesis, and argument structure; due by end of October)
3. Major paper (15 pages) **40%** (due by final course deadline)
4. Participation **10%**

Option #2

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3. Participation **10%**

Option #3

1. Literature review x 2 (5-6 pages each). **50%** (first due before Reading Week, second due by last class)
2. Textual Analysis x 4 (3-4 pages each). **40%** (one per month)
3. Participation **10%**

Explanation and Expectations of Assignments.

Annotated Bibliography

At this stage students are not expected to have a thesis but only a research topic or set of questions they want to investigate that will help focus their research. The aim of the AB is to help students develop the necessary research skills to be successful in graduate school (doing research is a big part of that) and to provide a solid foundation for writing their major paper by grounding their arguments in an understanding of the relevant literature surrounding their topic. To do that, students need to read all of the relevant literature related to their topic and then select from that the most relevant sources for their project (8-10). This takes some amount of effort and time. Shortcutting the assignment by reading abstracts or not carefully considering the content of the sources not only undermines the spirit of the assignment but also puts the student at a serious disadvantage when it comes time to write the paper itself. To get into the A-A+ range, I would want to see at least two main things.

1. Include a brief description of your research topic/question. Without it, I cannot evaluate the strength and relevance of your sources, or suggest some additional sources that might help with your project. Additionally, include with each entry an abstract containing a sentence or two explaining the relevance of the source to your project. I want to see that you didn't just pick the first 8 search results on Google but carefully selected the most relevant sources for your project.
2. The abstracts should not be descriptions of what the papers do; rather, they should present a summary of the paper's central arguments (its main claim[s] and the reasons they offer in support of it).

Project Description/Outline

When writing the project description you should already be at a point in the process where you have a clear sense of what your research question is and

Good scholarly writing (a dissertation, a book, a journal article) requires a number of different skills. You need to be able to summarize the argument in the text, defend a coherent thesis supported by well-organized arguments, summarize the current state of

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