2013

100-07 Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

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What is the best way to live? Are there good reasons to live morally? What is a just society? What is the relation between character and politics? This course will explore such questions in dialogue with the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. This course is an introduction to philosophy, or inquiry into fundamental questions. Philosophy does not pay off immediately as technical knowledge does; instead, it helps to develop you as a thoughtful and articulate person. The course is the first in the core requirement of three philosophy classes; it is followed by Theory of Knowledge and a philosophy elective. It is also part of the Ethics/Religion and Society focus, which also includes Theological Foundations, Literature and the Moral Imagination, and an elective. E/RS courses investigate ethical or religious dimensions of socially significant issues.

**Required texts** (other editions and translations are not acceptable)

Alain Badiou, *Plato’s “Republic,”* trans. Spitzer (Columbia, 2013)

It is important to read the assigned portions of the texts before class and write your reading journal, so that you are ready to participate in discussion. You will not find all the reading immediately understandable, but for this very reason it will stretch your mind.

**Grading**

Reading journal (see next page): 20%
Essay: 20%
Midterm exam (multiple-choice and short-answer test): 15%
Dialogue: 15%
Final exam (cumulative multiple-choice and short-essay test): 15%
Class participation (class discussion and group work, communication with me outside class, rewritten work): 15%
Reading journal

Your reading journal contains some of your own thoughts on the reading assignments, written before class discussion of the reading. The journal encourages you to keep up with the reading and come to class ready to participate. On any day, I may ask you what your question or observation is for that day.

Each journal entry should include a brief summary of the reading and one question or observation about the text. Approximately half a typed or neatly handwritten page per journal entry is appropriate; there is no upper length limit, and an occasional shorter entry is fine. There are a total of 37 days for which you can write a journal entry, but you are allowed to skip a maximum of any five days, so your minimum number of entries is 32. Keep your entries on separate sheets of paper, giving each a number matching the numbers of the reading assignments as noted in this syllabus; keep the sheets in chronological order from earliest to latest, in a binder or folder, and bring your entire journal to every class meeting. I will occasionally collect the journals, without prior warning, and give you a tentative grade. If your journal is not up to date and ready to turn in on a day when I choose to collect it, this may detract from your class participation grade; you should turn it in at the next class meeting.

The final grade on the journal will be determined at the end of the course. The grade will be based on the clarity and care of your writing—in other words, the journal should show that you are reading the assigned books attentively and working to formulate your thoughts about them. But this is not formal writing as in a paper, and errors in interpretation will not harm your grade as long as you are making an effort.

You may consult any sources you like as you write your journal, but they cannot substitute for the assigned text; they can only supplement it. They must also be cited properly in order to avoid plagiarism and an F (see next page).

Please note that you cannot pass the course without a complete reading journal (at least 32 entries).

Policies

Absence policy: I do not usually take roll, but I will usually notice if you are absent. You may miss a class for any reason, but you are expected to turn in your reading journal entry as makeup work when you return, so that I can see whether you are keeping up. Getting someone else’s class notes is a good idea, but copying them and turning them in as makeup work is unacceptable; your journal has to show that you read the text and thought about it yourself. If you do not turn in your journal promptly, I may subtract 0.1 grade point from your course grade for each day you missed. Anyone who misses more than 6 classes may fail the course, even if makeup work is turned in.

Late assignments will be penalized by up to one letter grade for each day they are late. Extensions should be requested well in advance of the due date.

Good English policy: I reserve the right to reject a piece of writing that has extensive flaws in spelling or grammar. Such an assignment must be corrected before it receives a grade, and it will be counted as late.

The essay may be rewritten. A rewrite will not change your grade on the essay, but it is a valuable exercise and will count as class participation. If you rewrite a paper, turn in the new version along with the original and my original comments. Rewrites may be turned in as late as the day of the final exam.

Laptops, phones, and similar devices may not be used in class without permission.

All course requirements must be completed in order to pass the course.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas, either as originally stated or rephrased, without giving credit to the source (such as a website, book, article, or another student’s writing). Plagiarism is dishonest and unacceptable. Whenever you use any sources other than the assigned texts, you must cite them. To learn more about plagiarism and methods of citation, visit www.xu.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism.

Any plagiarism will result in an F for the assignment or course at my discretion, and your dean will be notified of the incident. “It was an accident” or “I didn’t mean to” are not valid excuses; plagiarism is defined by the fact that your work uses someone else’s work without giving credit. You are responsible for the work that you turn in.

Calculating your grade

I give each element a letter grade, then convert it to a number on a 4-point scale (like the scale for your GPA), with pluses and minuses counting as 0.33 point. I multiply this number by the percentage the element is worth, and add all the results to get your raw grade. This raw grade is adjusted to account for absences, and then rounded to the nearest letter grade to yield the course grade.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Numerical Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading journal</td>
<td>B–</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.67 x 0.20 = 0.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.00 x 0.20 = 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.00 x 0.15 = 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.33 x 0.15 = 0.3495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>A–</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.67 x 0.15 = 0.5505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.00 x 0.15 = 0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raw grade = 2.884

3 absences with no makeup work = -0.3

Course grade = 2.584 = B-

Core student learning outcomes served by this course

- Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith
- Students will articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of great philosophers
- Students will analyze rationally competing claims about individual and political justice within foundational philosophical texts
- Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally
- Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources
- Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards
- Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence
- Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems
- Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world
- Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>What is piety?</td>
<td>Reading assignment #1: Before today’s class read <em>Euthyphro</em>, in <em>Five Dialogues</em>, through section 9b (pp. 2-11) and write a reading journal entry about it (see p. 2 of this syllabus).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The gods and justice</td>
<td>Reading assignment #2: Finish <em>Euthyphro</em> (pp. 11-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No class—Labor Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Socrates on trial</td>
<td>#3: <em>Apology</em> through 31c (pp. 22-35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Socrates convicted</td>
<td>#4: Finish <em>Apology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Socrates in prison</td>
<td>#5: <em>Crito</em> through 48b (pp. 45-51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>The death of Socrates</td>
<td>#6: Finish <em>Crito</em> (pp. 51-57); <em>Phaedo</em>, 114c-end (pp. 150-154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Handout: essay assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>What is justice?</td>
<td>#7: <em>Republic</em> 327a-331d (pp. 3-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Polemarchus</td>
<td>#8: <em>Republic</em> 331d-336a (pp. 8-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Badiou’s opening</td>
<td>#9: Badiou, Prologue (pp. 1-13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thrasymachus</td>
<td>#10: <em>Republic</em> 336b-344e (pp. 15-27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Socrates defeats Thrasymachus</td>
<td>#11: <em>Republic</em> 344e-354c (pp. 27-42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Essay due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Glaucan and Adimantus’ challenges</td>
<td>#12: <em>Republic</em> 357a-369a (pp. 42-57); focus on Glaucan’s speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Glaucan’s and Amantha’s challenges</td>
<td>#13: Badiou, Chapter 2 (pp. 45-62); focus on Amantha’s speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Reading Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Group exercise in class: constructing a city</td>
<td>No reading assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>A city comes into being</td>
<td>#14: <em>Republic</em> 369b-376c (pp. 57-68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Badiou’s origins of society and the state</td>
<td>#15: Badiou, Chapter 3 (pp. 63-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td><strong>No class</strong>—Fall holiday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Disciplines of the mind and body:</td>
<td>#16: Badiou, Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 76-105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The guardians of the city</td>
<td>#17: <em>Republic</em> 412c-421c (pp. 115-124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The communist city</td>
<td>#18: Badiou, pp. 106-middle of 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The excellences of the city</td>
<td>#19: <em>Republic</em> 427d-435a (pp. 132-142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The virtues of the city</td>
<td>#20: Badiou, pp. 121-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>The parts and excellences of the soul</td>
<td>Optional reading: 435a-439a #21: <em>Republic</em> 439b-445b (pp. 149-157)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Subjective justice</td>
<td>#22: Badiou, Chapter 7 (pp. 131-147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The first wave</td>
<td>#23: <em>Republic</em> 445c-457c (pp. 157-170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 30</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>The second wave</td>
<td>#24: <em>Republic</em> 457c-466d (pp. 170-182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Badiou’s first and second waves</td>
<td>#25: Badiou, Chapter 8 (pp. 148-161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The third wave</td>
<td>Optional reading: 466e-471e #26: <em>Republic</em> 472a-480a (pp. 190-202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 6</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Philosophers as rulers</td>
<td>#27: <em>Republic</em> 487b-489a, 496a-501c (pp. 207-209, 218-225) and Badiou, pp. 182-185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nov. 8  F  The form of the good  
#28: Republic 501d-511e (pp. 225-239)  
Handout: dialogue assignment

Nov. 11  M  The allegory of the cave  
#29: Republic 514a-521c (pp. 239-248)

Nov. 13  W  The allegory of the movie theater  
#30: Badiou, pp. 212-223

Nov. 15  F  Educating philosophers and founding the just city  
#31: Badiou, Chapter 12 (pp. 224-244) and  
Republic 540a-541b (pp. 273-274)

Nov. 18  M  Film in class: A State of Mind (part 1)  
No reading assignment.

Nov. 20  W  A State of Mind (part 2)

Nov. 22  F  A State of Mind (part 3)  
**Dialogue due**

Nov. 25  M  Badiou on timocracy and oligarchy  
#32: Badiou, Chapter 13 (pp. 245-262)

Nov. 27  W  Democracy  
#33: Republic 543a-545c, 557a-558c (pp. 274-277)

Nov. 29  F  **No class**—Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 2  M  Badiou on democracy  
#34: Badiou, pp. 188-191, 266-269

Dec. 4  W  The tyrannical soul  
#35: Republic 571a-578c (pp. 309-319)

Dec. 6  F  The myth of Er  
#36: Republic 608c-621d (pp. 357-373)

Dec. 9  M  Badiou’s myth of Er  
#37: Badiou, Epilogue (pp. 337-354)

Dec. 11  W  Course review and evaluations  
**Reading journal due**

Dec. 18  W  **Final exam**, 10:00-11:50 am