100-16 Ethics As Introduction to Philosophy

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"Chalepa Ta Kala." "Anything fine is difficult."
Plato, Republic, Book IV, 435c

"The point is that the gods never neglect anyone who is prepared to devote himself
to becoming moral and, by practicing virtue,
to assimilate himself to God as much as is humanly possible."
Plato, Republic, Book X, 613a

"Classical studies inevitably lead to investigation of human nature."
Eric Voeglin, "On Classical Studies"

"The order of the soul as the source of order in society and the parallel construction of the
two orders occupy us at great length in the analysis of the Republic."
Eric Voeglin, Order and History: Plato and Aristotle, p. 11.

The Course in a Nutshell

The title of this course means not only that this is your first course in philosophy, but that it uses
one branch of philosophy, namely ethics, to introduce you to the "erotic" discipline of
philosophy itself, which includes other branches, namely epistemology, metaphysics, logic,
aesthetics, etc. Since your next required course is one in the theory of knowledge
(epistemology), I hope to point out along the way where Plato introduces you to this branch of
philosophy and his particular theory of knowledge. I shall also point out where he introduces
you to metaphysics or ontology, logic, aesthetics, and even theology.

The required reading for this course is Plato's Republic, and our primary concern is Plato's
ethical theory as he explains it in this book. The focus will be on the soul as the key aspect of
Plato's ethical theory, paideia or education of body and soul, therapeia or care of the soul, right
order, moral life, and relation of moral life to human happiness.

We want to see if we can take from Plato anything we can use in our own personal ethical
formation and in our own experience of moral life.

Some Goals of the Course
We shall formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources. We shall evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence. We shall 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, and the reasonableness of a basic rudimentary faith (necessary for their to be any kind of society at all) and of religious faith. We shall articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writing of a great philosopher. We shall relate our knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to our life experiences and the challenges confronting today's world. We shall be intellectually, morally, and spiritually educated and formed individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance.

**Required Texts**

Materials from Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity, Myth and Transition to Philosophy*, will be provided.

Materials from Evan Brann's *The Music of the Republic* will be provided.

Materials from Robert Earl Cushman's *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy* will be provided.

*Republic* by Plato, Oxford World's Classics, will have to be purchased.

*On Conscience* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger will have to be purchased.

**Grading and Course Requirements**

There will be two two-page papers. The precise topic for each will be given to you. Each paper will consist of a statement of Plato's position on a subject, a thesis of your own, a statement of what you will do to defend the thesis, an argument that defends the thesis, an explanation of why the the thesis is important at all and to you in particular (20%, 10% each). **There will be no computers in class.**

There will be five "probes" (5%, 1% each).

There will be two tests (20%, 10% each).

There will be four quizzes (20%, 5% each)

There will be student participation (5%).

There will be a final examination (30%).
Assignments

8/25 Introduction, Syllabus, Quotations Above as Focus
8/27 "Visual Introduction to Philosophy"
8/29 A Tour of Western Philosophy and Greek History Leading to "Plato and Socrates"
Prelection of First Assignment
9/3 Voeglin's *Order and History*, "Plato and Socrates," Chapter I, pp. 3-14
9/5 Voeglin's *Order and History*, "Eros and the World," Chapter I, pp. 14-23
9/8 Quiz I

Organization of Plato's Republic

Prologue
9/10 327a-327b, *Descent* to the Piraeus
   328b-331d, Cephalus, Justictee of the Older Generation
9/12 331e-336a, Polemarchus, Justice of the Middle Generation
   336b-354c, Thrasyimachus, Justice of the Sophist

Introduction
9/15-9/17 357a-369b The Question: Is Justice Better Than Injustice?

Part I: Genesis and Order of the Polis
9/19 First Paper Due
9/19-9/22 369b-376e. Genesis of the Polis
9/24-9/26 376e-412b, Education of the Guardians
9/29-10/1 412b-427c, Constitution of the Polis
10/3 Quiz II
10/3-10/6 427c-445e, Justice in the Polis

Part II: Embodiment of the Idea
10/8-10/13 449a-471c, Somatic Unit of the Polis and the Hellenes
10/15-10/17 471c-502c, Rule of Philosophers
10/20-10/22 502c-521c, The Idea of the Agathon
10/24-10/27 521c-541b, Education of the Philosophers

10/24 Test I

Part III: Decline of the Polis
10/29 543-550c, Timocracy
   550c-555b, Oligarchy
   555b-562a, Democracy
   562b-576b, Tyranny

10/31 Quiz III
Epilogue

11/3  **Second Paper Due**
11/3  595a-608b, Rejection of Mimetic Art
     608c-612a, Immortality of the Soul
11/5  612a-613e, Rewards of Justice in Life
     613e-631d, Judgment of the Dead

11/7 **Test II**

11/10-12/1 Ratzinger's *On Conscience*

12/3 **Quiz IV**
12/3 Cushman's *The Human Plight and Plato's Task*
12/5 Cushman's *Knowledge Through Conversion* and *The Means of Conversion*
12/8 Cushman's *The Role of Love in Knowledge*
12/10 Cushman's *The Sovereignty of the Good* and *Wisdom: the Fruit of Therapeia*

12/12 Summation, Preparation for Final Exam, and Completion of Evaluations

Final Examination from 2:00 P.M. until 3:50 P.M., Wednesday, December 17, 2014