

Winter Term 2019
The University of Western Ontario Department of Philosophy
Professor D. Henry

: T 1:30-3:30, W 2:30-3:30
: Sommerville House (SH) 3307
Thursday 9:30-11:30 am

This course is a critical examination of the philosophy of Plato. Plato is agreed to be one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most engaging and influential philosophers in the history of Western thought. The course will cover representative dialogues from each of the three traditional periods of Plato thought: the early "Socratic" dialogues; the so-called middle dialogues; and his late period. Throughout these dialogues we find the character of Socrates engaged in conversation with various Athenians on a whole range of philosophical issues: What is philosophical inquiry and how should it be conducted? Can rational arguments be used to convince people to follow their best interests or does philosophy need to rely on the art of persuasion? Does knowledge require an unchanging world of Forms or can it be grounded in our immediate sensations of the things around us? Is it more shameful to commit injustice or to suffer injustice? Is the life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure philosophically defensible? If not, what role does pleasure occupy in the good life? Students will engage original texts in translation.

1. Short Paper #1 (10-12 pages)
2. Short Paper #2 (10-12 pages)
3. Participation

Option #3

1. Literature review x 2 (4-5 pages each).
2. Textual Analysis x 4 (3-4 pages each).
3. Participation.

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

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 the literature, situate your position within some broader debate, and provide a close analysis of difficult arguments or stretches of text. While a term paper would involve all of these skills, the textual analysis assignment (as the name implies) is meant to help students develop the last of these independently of the others. The analysis should not be a short paper or a summary of the text. You should pick a difficult stretch of text, argument, or some other notable aspect of the reading and provide a close analysis of the argument or ideas contained therein. For example, how does the Power Argument at *Gorgias* 466b-468e work? What are the premises and how do they support the conclusion? What role is played by the distinction between "doing what appears best"

