

## CLAG 358 | Plato in Place: Reading the *Republic* on the Ground in Athens Fall 2026

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### Course Description

Plato is too important to be left to the philosophers. No ideal Form, he was at various points in his mortal life a wrestler, budding tragedian, aspiring politician, friend of oligarchs, student of Socrates, Syracusan schemer, art critic, and founder of the Academy. This course is an intensive introduction to his most influential work, the *Republic*. We will take advantage of our superb location to trace the dialogue's topographical, historical, and material culture contours. We will also dip our toes into reception studies, exploring the dialogue's afterlife in modern film. The course has no prerequisites and requires no knowledge of languages other than English. Students who know some ancient Greek are encouraged to join me and other interested parties in tackling short excerpts in the original outside of class.

### Course Approach

The course takes a three-fold approach to the *Republic*, exploring the world **of the text**, the world **behind the text**, and the world **in front of the text**. The first category involves close reading of the dialogue to see what it says. The second involves resituating the text in its many ancient contexts to figure out what it meant. Our task here is complicated by (*inter alia*) Plato's extensive use of quotations and allusions, humor and irony, and by the dialogue's frame and genre. In addition, we modern readers encounter the dialogue at a great remove: much of what Plato and his original audience experienced in their daily lives has been lost to us. We will make expeditions to sites in and around Athens to rediscover some of these missing *Realien*. Student reports on selected scholarly articles and book chapters will provide further illumination. For the third category, we will watch and analyze modern films to explore the *Republic's* lasting impact on the world we inhabit today. Class meetings will proceed via a mixture of discussion, lecture, student presentations, and learning *in situ*.

Our aim is dialectic, not eristic. Let us therefore do our work well, "believing that the soul is immortal and capable of enduring every ill and every good, sticking always to the upward path, [and] practicing justice with wisdom in every way." If we do so, we will part as fast friends come December and, like Olympic victors of old, claim the rewards of justice, both now and in the years to come. (*Republic* 601c-d)

### Learning Objectives

By the end of the course the students will be able to:

- identify and explicate important passages from all portions of the *Republic*;
- draw specific connections between the text and the people, topography, monuments, archaeological remains, and historical particulars of classical Athens;
- read, summarize, analyze, and discuss challenging scholarly material;
- prepare and give effective oral presentations;
- Demonstrate ways that the *Republic's* concerns remain relevant today.

**Class preparation:** Your job is to come to each class on time having done the assigned reading well and thought about it carefully. Be sure to bring both your hard copy of the *Republic* and any relevant .pdfs. The assigned reading averages out to around 30 pages most weeks. On weeks when you are presenting a report (see below) you will have more. While you can cram for some courses, this class is not among them. Plan on spending part of each day on Plato, drawing inspiration from the hexameters of Hesiod: "Even if you add only a little to a little, yet if you do it often enough, this little may yet become great." (*Works and Days*, 361-2).

**Class participation:** Be prepared to talk! Plato's Socrates had reservations about the value of the written word, preferring instead the living discourse "that goes together with knowledge, and is written in the soul of the learner; that can defend itself, and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing." (*Phaedrus* 276a) I will employ various measures, all permitted under the Geneva Convention, to promote good discussion.

**Pop quizzes:** To encourage you in the habits of virtue, some classes will begin with (or be interrupted by) a short, unannounced quiz on that day's assigned reading.

**Student reports:** Working in pairs or trios, students will prepare and deliver two reports. The job of the presenters is to summarize and help lead discussion of an assigned scholarly text related to the *Republic*. Prior to the class, the

group will write up and circulate *their own* one-page summary of the scholarly work, along with several important questions they want us to consider. Following the class, the group will write up and circulate a one-page summary of the discussion. They will also submit to me a short self-assessment of their performance. I will take all these materials into account in assigning a grade for the presentation.

**Examinations:** Students will write both a midterm and a final examination. Each exam will involve short answer questions, passage identifications and explications, and one or more analytic essays. Part of the preparation for each examination will involve watching a modern film related to the *Republic*.

## Evaluation and Grading

Students' academic performance will be evaluated based on their:

- attendance and class participation;
- performance on pop quizzes and exams;
- performance on their student reports (including written materials and class facilitation);

Grades for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation:	10%
Pop quizzes:	20%
Student reports	20% (2@10% each)
Mid-term exam:	20%
Final exam:	30%

## CYA Regulations

### Attendance Policy

Punctual, consistent attendance is crucial to success in this course. For any absence (whether excused or unexcused), please notify me promptly. The sole arbiter of whether an absence is excused is the Student Affairs Office. Notify them promptly regarding illness etc. using the form available in the Student Portal, and provide proper documentation as specified in the student handbook.

Please note that you do **not** have the right to make up quizzes, presentations, and exams missed due to unexcused absences. Starting with your third unexcused absence, your class participation grade will suffer as follows:

- 3rd unexcused absence: class participation grade drops 50% (5 points out of possible 10).
- 4th unexcused absence: class participation grade drops to 0.

Five or more **unexcused absences** will result in you failing the course, unless there are extraordinary circumstances approved by the Academic Director.

Please make every effort to be on time to class, including for our site visits: we will not wait for latecomers. Habitual tardiness will be treated as unexcused absence for grading purposes. For site visits, always bring your student ID and ICOMOS pass. (A water bottle, hat, and sunscreen are also recommended.) Wear clothing suited to the weather: we will go, hot or cold, rain or shine. If you arrive late to a site, you will have to enter and meet us on your own. Please note that your friends and family may not participate in our site visits.

### Academic Accommodations

Students must submit an official letter from the office at their home school that handles academic accommodations, or else have that office send a letter on their behalf. Students should also talk to me individually at the start of the course to discuss how their accommodations will apply.

### Intellectual Indebtedness

All work you submit in this course must be your own: you are fully responsible for it. Any ideas borrowed from others must be clearly identified via quotations, paraphrases, summaries, etc., and accompanied by accurate citations and a corresponding bibliography.

**Permitted Uses of AI:** You may use AI to brainstorm, prepare for and follow up on class discussions and trips, and study for quizzes and exams. Bear in mind that it is up to you to separate the wheat from the chaff: not everything you read online is true, even if AI says it is. (If you doubt this, run a generative AI prompt on something you know well and look for the hallucinations). You are ultimately the one responsible for all mistakes in your work. Caveat lector.

**Prohibited Uses of AI:** You may not use generative AI in creating your student report summaries or self-assessment. If I have doubts in this regard, I reserve the right to check your understanding of the material however I see fit. Inability to adequately explain work you have submitted will be considered plagiarism and treated accordingly. Caveat scriptor.

**Use of Laptops**

In-class or on-site use of laptops and other electronic devices is permitted for course-related activities such as note-taking, viewing site plans, consulting references, etc. Inappropriate use is distracting to others and will lead to a suspension of this privilege.

**Upgrade to 400-level course**

This course can be upgraded to a 400-level starting the second week of classes. If you are interested in this option, please ask me.

**Class Schedule**

Class Day	Day/Date/ Place	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due
1	Sep 8	Introduction
2	Sep 10	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 1 (327a-342e) Nails, <i>The People of Plato (PP)</i> : entries for Cephalus II, Polemarchus, Socrates student report: Simms, "The Thracian Goddess Bendis"
3	Sep 15	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 1 (343a-354c) Davies, <i>Athenian Propertied Families (APF)</i> : 10808 Nikias I, pp. 403-407 Nails, <i>PP</i> : entries for Niceratus, Thrasymachus student report: White, "Thrasymachus the Diplomat"
	Sep 17-19	FS   Crete
4	Sep 22	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 2 (357a-372a) Davies, <i>APF</i> : 8792 Kritias IV, VIII-XI, pp. 329-334 Nails, <i>PP</i> : entries for Adeimantus I, Glaucon IV student report: Blondell, <i>The Play of Character</i> , pp. 199-228
5	Sep 24	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 2 (372b-383c) student report: Kitchell, "Man's Best Friend?" Long, "Who Let the Dogs Out?"
6	Sep 25 [Make up Friday]	<b>meet at the entrance to the Kerameikos (on Ermou)</b> Arrington, "Topographic Semantics"
7	Sep 29	<b>meet at the entrance to the Agora (on Adrianou)</b> first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 3 (386a-401d) student report: Sobak, "Socrates among the Shoemakers"
8	Oct 1	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 3 (401e-417b) student report: Schofield, "The Noble Lie"
9	Oct 2 [Friday]	<b>bus trip to Piraeus: details TBA</b> Bakewell, "I Went Down to Piraeus"
10	Oct 6	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 4 (419a-435a) student report: Bundrick, "The Fabric of the City"
	Oct 7	No class
	Oct 8-10	FS   Peloponnese
11	Oct 13	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 4 (435b-445e)

		student report: Allen, <i>The World of Prometheus</i> , pp. 245-277
12	Oct 15	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 5 (449a-465e) student report: Gardner, "Remnants of the Family"
13	Oct 20	<b>meet at the entrance to the Epigraphical Museum (on Tositsa Street, next to the National Archaeological Museum)</b> second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 5 (466a-480a) student report: Arrington, "Classical War Monument"
14	Oct 22	<b>midterm exam</b>
	Oct 23-Nov 1	Fall Break
15	Nov 3	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 6 (484a-497a) student report: Morgan, "Plato's Goat-Stags"
16	Nov 5	<b>bus trip to site of Plato's Academy (details TBA)</b> second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 6 (497b-511e) student report: Baltus, "Plato's School"
17	Nov 10	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 7 (514a-528e) student report: Bakewell, "Mining Plato's Cave"
	Nov 11-14	FS   Abroad
18	Nov 17	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 7 (529a-541a) student report: Lane, <i>Of Rule and Office</i> , pp. 213-246
19	Nov 19	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 8 (543a-557c) student report: Goodman, "Plato the Novelist"
	Nov 20	Day Trip
20	Nov 24	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 8 (558a-569c) student report: Kasimis, "The Play of Conspiracy"
	Nov 26-29	Thanksgiving Break
21	Dec 1	first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 9 (571a-583a)
22	Dec 3	second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 9 (583b-592b) student report: Keuls, <i>Plato and Greek Painting</i> , pp. 59-87
23	Dec 8	<b>meet at the entrance to the South Slope of the Akropolis (Theater of Dionysus entrance, opposite the Akropolis Museum)</b> first half of <i>Republic</i> Book 10 (595a-608a) student report: Tarrant, "Plato the Dramatist"
24	Dec 10	<b>meet at the entrance to the National Archaeological Museum (on Patision)</b> second half of <i>Republic</i> Book 10 (608b-621c) student report: Keum, "Plato's Myth of Er"
<b>Final Exam date TBA</b>		

**Course bibliography:** All required readings (including for student reports) are available in either the CYA library, online via JSTOR, or on Moodle. Each student should have a hard copy of C.D. Reeve's translation of the *Republic* and bring it to each class meeting.

C.D. Reeve, *Plato Republic*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2004. (ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-736-3)

Other readings:

- Danielle Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens*, Princeton, 2000.
- Nathan Arrington, "The Form(s) and Date(s) of a Classical War Monument: Re-evaluating IGi3 1163 and the Case for Delion," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 181 (2012): 61-75.
- Nathan Arrington, "Topographic Semantics: The Location of the Athenian Public Cemetery and Its Significance for the Nascent Democracy," *Hesperia* 79 (2010): 499-539.
- Geoff Bakewell, "I Went Down to Piraeus: Routes, Roads, and Plato's *Republic*," *Hesperia* 89 (2020): 725-755.
- Geoff Bakewell, "Mining Plato's Cave: Silver Mining, Slavery, and Philosophical Education," *Polis* 40.3 (2023): 436-456.
- Mattias Baltés, "Plato's School, the Academy," *Hermathena* 155 (1993): 5-26.
- Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, Cambridge, 2002.
- Sheramy Bundrick, "The Fabric of the City: Imaging Textile Production in Classical Athens," *Hesperia* 77 (2008): 283-334.
- J.K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C.*, Oxford, 1971.
- Catherine Gardner, "The Remnants of the Family: The Role of Women and Eugenics in *Republic V*," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 17 (2000): 217-235.
- Rob Goodman, "Plato the Novelist: The Family Saga in *Republic* 8-9," *Polity* 55 (2023): 519-543.
- Demetra Kasimis, "The Play of Conspiracy and Democratic Erosion in Plato's *Republic*," *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (2021): 926-937.
- Eva Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting*, Leiden, 1978.
- Tae-yeoun Keum, "Plato's Myth of Er and the Reconfiguration of Nature," *American Political Science Review* 114 (2020): 54-67.
- Kenneth Kitchell, "Man's Best Friend? The Changing Role of the Dog in Greek Society," in Barbro Santillo Frizell, ed., *PECUS: Man and Animal in Antiquity. Proceedings of the Conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9-12, 2002*, Rome, 2004, pp. 177-182.
- Melissa Lane, *Of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political*, Princeton, 2025.
- Christopher Long, "Who Let the Dogs Out?," in Jeremy Bell and Michael Naas, eds., *Plato's Animals: Gadflies, Horses, Swans, and Other Philosophical Beasts*, Bloomington, 2015, pp. 131-145.
- Kathryn Morgan, "Plato's Goat-Stags and the Uses of Comparison," in Pierre Destrée and Radcliffe Edmonds III, eds., *Plato and the Power of Images*, Leiden 2017, pp. 179-198.
- Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*, Indianapolis, 2002.
- Malcolm Schofield, "The Noble Lie," in G.R.F. Ferrari, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 138-164.
- Ronda Simms, "The Cult of the Thracian Goddess Bendis in Athens and Attica," *The Ancient World* 18 (1988): 59-76.
- Robert Sobak, "Sokrates Among the Shoemakers," *Hesperia* 84 (2015): 669-712.
- Dorothy Tarrant, "Plato as Dramatist," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 75 (1955): 82-89.
- Stephen White, "Thrasymachus the Diplomat," *Classical Philology* 90 (1995): 307-327.

**Suggestions for further reading**

- Carol Atack, *Plato: A Civic Life*, London, 2024.
- Vincent Azoulay and Paulin Ismard, *Athens 403 BC: A Democracy in Crisis?*, tr. by Lorna Coing, Cambridge, 2023.
- Geoff Bakewell, "Plato Plays Polis," *Board Game Studies Journal* 16 (2022): 413-430.
- Geoff Bakewell, "Stasis, Competition, and the 'Noble Lie': Metic Mettle in Plato's *Republic*," in Eris vs. Aemulatio: *Competition in Ancient Greece and Rome*, eds. Cynthia Damon and Christoph Pieper, E.J. Brill, 2018, 98-119.
- Diskin Clay, "Plato's First Words," *Yale Classical Studies* 29 (1992): 113-129.
- Clinton Corcoran, *Topography and Deep Structure in Plato: The Construction of Place in the Dialogues*, Albany, 2016.
- Gabriel Danzig, "The Use and Abuse of Critias: Conflicting Portraits in Plato and Xenophon," *Classical Quarterly* 64 (2014): 507-524.
- Jacob Howland, *Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's Republic*, Philadelphia, 2018.
- Jacob Howland, *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy*, Philadelphia, 2004.
- Mark Gifford, "Dramatic Dialectic in *Republic* Book 1," in David Sedley, ed., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. XX (2001), 35-106.
- John Jones, "'Living above the shop': domestic aspects of the ancient industrial workshops of the Laureion area of south-east Attica," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 15 (2007): 267-280.
- Peter Krentz, *The Thirty at Athens*, Ithaca, 1982.
- Michael Morgan, "Plato, Inquiry, and Painting," *Apeiron* 23 (1990): 121-145.
- Debra Nails, "The Dramatic Date of Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Journal* 93 (1998): 383-396.
- Cynthia Patterson, "'Citizen Cemeteries' in Classical Athens?," *Classical Quarterly* 56 (2006): 48-56.
- Elizabeth Pemberton, "A Note on Skiagraphia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 80 (1976): 82-84.
- Maria Pipili, "Wearing an Other Hat: Workmen in Town and Country," in Beth Cohen, ed., *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Leiden, 2000, 150-179.
- Sarah Pomeroy, "Optics and the Line in Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Quarterly* 21 (1971): 389-392.
- James Romm, *Plato and the Tyrant: The Fall of Greece's Greatest Dynasty and the Making of a Philosophic Masterpiece*, New York, 2025.
- Arlene Saxonhouse, "Democracy, Equality, and *Eide*: A Radical View from Book 8 of Plato's *Republic*," *American Political Science Review* 92 (1998): 273-283

Ron Stroud, "An Athenian Law on Silver Coinage," *Hesperia* 43 (1974): 157-188.

Robert Sutton, "The Good, the Base, and the Ugly: The Drunken Orgy in Attic Vase Painting and the Athenian Self," in Beth Cohen, ed., *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Leiden, 2000, 180-202.

Barbara Tsakirgis, "What is a House? Conceptualizing the Greek House," in Allison Glazebrook and Barbara Tsakirgis, eds., *Houses of Ill Repute: The Archaeology of Brothels, Houses, and Taverns in the Ancient Greek World*, Philadelphia, 2016, 13-25.

Robin Waterfield, *Plato of Athens: A Life in Philosophy*, Oxford, 2023.