

POL 402H1F (L0101)/ POL 2027 H1F (L0101): Problems in the Political Thought of the  
Socratic School  
Fall Semester, 2017

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-3:00pm

### Description

This course will examine Plato's *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus* in order to grapple with Plato's presentation of the leading "sophist" of classical Athens, Protagoras. The themes will be virtue, "sophistry," knowledge, and pleasure. (We may or may not have time to engage with the treatment of pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*.)

### Texts

*Plato: Philebus*. 1993. Translated by Dorothea Frede. Indianapolis: Hackett.

*Plato. Protagoras*. 1992. Translated by Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell. Indianapolis: Hackett.

*Plato's Theaetetus*. 1986. Translated by Seth Benardete. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

These books are available at the Bob Miller Book Room, 180 Bloor St. West.

### Format, Requirements, and Marking Scheme

The class will be conducted as a seminar in which the instructor will lecture and initiate discussion and in which students will be expected to participate actively. Active participation will require considerable time and effort in preparing for class. You should plan to read the assigned Platonic texts very carefully, taking notes as you read, marking your texts, and returning again and again to difficult or salient passages. Because the reading and the in-class sessions will be demanding, it is important that you sign up only after realistically assessing whether your schedule this semester will permit you to do the required work.

The marking scheme for the undergraduate course will be as follows: one essay of 2000 words will be due on **October 11, 2017, by 5:00pm** (35% of the final mark), and a second essay of 3500 words will be due on **December 6, 2017, by 5:00pm** (50% of the final mark). I will also assign a **class participation mark** (15%, which will involve attendance and speaking in class). In addition to making an original and well-structured argument, each paper must also engage substantively with the secondary literature – in the first paper, you will be required to cite and engage with at least two secondary sources, at least one of which must be a book; in the second paper, you will be required to cite at least four secondary sources, at least two of which must be books.

The marking scheme for the graduate course will be different. Graduate students may choose one of the following options:

(1) one essay of 3000 words will be due on **October 11, 2017, by 5:00pm** (35% of the final mark), and a second essay of 4500 words will be due on **December 6, 2017, by 5:00pm** (50% of the final mark). I will also assign a **class participation mark** (15%, which will involve attendance and speaking in class). In addition to making an original and well-structured

argument, each paper must also engage substantively with the secondary literature – in the first paper, you will be required to cite and engage with at least two secondary sources, at least one of which must be a book; in the second paper, you will be required to cite at least five secondary sources, at least two of which must be books.

(2) One essay of 7000 words, due on **December 6, 2017, by 5:00pm** (85% of the final mark). I will also assign a **class participation mark** (15%, which will involve attendance and speaking in class). In addition to making an original and well-structured argument, your paper must also engage substantively with the secondary literature; hence, you will be required to cite and engage with at least seven secondary sources, at least two of which must be books.

The papers should be sent to me at [Ryan.Balot@utoronto.ca](mailto:Ryan.Balot@utoronto.ca). I will suggest paper topics well in advance of the deadlines, but you should feel free to construct your own topics provided that you discuss the topics with me. I will penalize tardiness by subtracting 1% per day of lateness.

Students are advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their essays and assignments before turning them in to me. These should be kept at least until the marked assignments have been returned. You are of course responsible for familiarizing yourself with the university's policy on plagiarism. In short, to comply with the university's code regarding academic honesty, you must write your papers specifically for this class; you should not borrow material from another class; and you should not use another person's words or ideas without attribution, whether those words or ideas come from conversations, the internet, or printed materials. If you are in doubt about whether you are committing plagiarism, feel free to ask me, but a good rule of thumb is that if you are wondering whether you might be committing plagiarism, you should cite a source.

#### **On Reserve at Robarts Library**

(other copies may be available in the stacks or in the college libraries; readings for the other dialogues to follow in due course)

Bartlett, Robert C. 2016. *Sophistry and Political Philosophy: Protagoras' Challenge to Socrates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coby, Patrick. 1987. *Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment: A Commentary on Plato's Protagoras*. Bucknell UP. B382 .C63 1987

Farrar, Cynthia. 1988. *The Origins of Democratic Thinking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irwin, T. 1995. *Plato's Ethics*. Oxford University Press. B398 .E8 I78 1995X

Kahn, Charles. 1996. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Klosko, G. 1986. *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*. Methuen. JC71 .P62 K56 1986

Nussbaum, Martha. 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saxonhouse, Arlene. 2006. *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shaw, J. Clerk. 2015. *Plato's Anti-hedonism and the Protagoras*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.