

## **Trial and Death of Socrates Syllabus**

Spring 2019, University of Haifa,

Sunday; Wednesday 10:00-12:00

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Schneider

### **Course Summary:**

Individually, the Platonic dialogues of *The Euthyphro*, *The Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo* are each philosophical masterpieces. Read together, they form a cohesive narrative of the trial and death of Socrates. This narrative deals with epistemic issues concerning the nature of definition, explanation, doubt and certainty. It deals with ethical issues concerning divine command theory, the good, virtue, and praise and blame; political questions about duty, civil disobedience, the authority of the state; and finally, questions about the meaning of life, and the meaning of death. Indeed, taken together these works shed light on the nature of philosophy itself, and offer an examination on the role and worth of philosophy in the life of the individual and within a political state.

### **Method:**

Our goal in this course is to engage philosophically with the ideas and arguments contained within the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo* dialogues.

Philosophical engagement involves both a private component and a social component. The private component consists in the careful reading of texts, rumination upon puzzles, ideas, and argumentation, and an on going struggle to articulate one's thoughts in a clear and accessible manner. The social component is something of a test of the results of this struggle: For it is in discussion—both spoken and written—that we most easily come to discover the limits of our understanding and the confusion within our thought.

The structure and the assignments of this course are aimed at facilitating philosophical engagement.

### **Course Structure:**

Class will consist of structured discussion. Sometimes discussion will be instructor lead, sometimes it will be student led. For the sake of class discussion, Students are expected to not only have read the texts assigned for the week, but also to have thought carefully about them. Students are to read the entire dialogue prior to class.

*Everyone is expected to come to class with questions about the material already prepared. While no one is expected to possess a complete grasp of all the content the text, students should come to each class with a familiarity with the reading assignment, and with the ability to contribute to the group's understanding of the content found therein.*

**Assignments and Grading:**

One Short Paper (1500 words) (May 1<sup>st</sup>) (20 points)

One Class Presentation (20 points)

Participation: (Attendance + discussion+ prepared questions) (20 points)

One Tutorial examination (1500 word max paper + discussion) (40 points)

Grade: Total Points/ 100

**Note: The course will be conducted in English.**

**Required Texts:**

It is imperative that we all have access to the same translation of the text. To this end I have uploaded the required texts for this course on Moodle. I have selected the translation of G.M.A Grube as it appears in:

Plato, John M. Cooper, and D. S. Hutchinson. 1997. Complete works. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Pub.

Students are more than welcome to read alternate translations, or even the original Greek (I even recommend it). Nevertheless, students should always bring with them to class the Grube edition as it appears in the moodle site for this course.

**Assignments:**

**Class Presentation:** Each student will be required to give a presentation about one weekly reading. The presentation should be presented with the purpose of facilitating discussion. The presentation should include:

1) A *brief* synopsis of the portion of the dialogue that was assigned for the week,

---

- 
- 2) A careful examination and assessment of a particular argument that the reading offers.
  - 3) A discussion of a puzzle or point of confusion within the assigned text.
  - 4) A set of discussion questions.

**Prepared Questions:** Students must prepare and submit 3 discussion questions about the material that is assigned for each class. Students can either email me their questions—in which case the questions must be received at least 2 hours before the beginning of the class, or students can turn in a physical copy of their questions at the very start of class. These questions are *discussion questions*. No credit will be given for questions that merely express confusion.

**Example of a good question:** Socrates's claims in Crito 43d that "They [the majority] cannot make a man wise or foolish, but they inflict things haphazardly." This is a strange statement: It seems the majority can make a man foolish... the power of crowds is well attested to... think of propaganda/advertising/"education"/etc., and even in the *Apology*, Socrates is quite careful to defend himself against the reputation he has acquired from the majority of Athenians. Is Socrates contradicting himself? Or does he only mean that the majority cannot intentionally make some one wise or foolish...that these are some of things they can only inflict haphazardly?

**Example of a badly put question:** What does the passage at Crito 43d mean? I don't understand it.

**Short Paper:** The short paper assignment is a short 1500 word essay due on MAY 1<sup>st</sup>. The short essay form should not be treated with any less seriousness than a longer paper. Indeed, a good short essay should take just as much time as a longer paper. Your goal is to say something important and interesting, both quickly and clearly. A sample essay is provided on the moodle website.

**Tutorial Examination:** The tutorial examination consists of two parts. The first part is a written short paper (1500 words). The second part consists of the examination of this paper. You and another student will meet with me at a to be decided date and time, you will read your papers, and will proceed to discuss (examine) your papers for about an hour. Your grade will be determined mainly by your paper, but the examination will give me the opportunity to think better or worse of your paper depending upon the discussion that takes place.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Intro to Euthyphro: 1-5c, 5c-11b

---

Week 2: Euthyphro 11b to end.

Week 3: Apology 28b

Week 4: Apology 32a

Week 5: Apology to end

Week 6: Crito beginning to 41e

Week 7: Crito 41e to 44e

Week 8: Crito to 54e (end)

Week 9: Phaedo: beginning to 65d

Week 10 Phaedo: to 73

Week 11 Phaedo: to 89

Week 12 Phaedo: to 103

Week 13 Phaedo: to end