

PHIL 451/551: VIRTUE, JUSTICE, AND THE
GOOD IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

*Epistemology and Psychology in
Plato's Phaedo and Phaedrus*

DAMIEN STOREY | FALL 2022 | VERSION 1.0
WHEN: TUESDAY'S 14:30–17:10 | WHERE: SCI Z32

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COURSE PARTICULARS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

When commentators discuss Plato's epistemology and psychology they often focus on the *Republic*. But the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are both dialogues that are written (it seems) around the same period and contain lengthy discussions of many of the same epistemological and psychological questions, like the distinction between belief and knowledge, the connection between perception, judgement, and desire, and the division of the soul into parts. Much of what these dialogues say is in agreement with what we find in the *Republic*, but some positions are curiously different.

The aim of this course is to read these two dialogues as crucial sources for understanding Plato's middle-period epistemology and psychology. As we will see, they are especially rich sources for understanding Plato's view of the kind of low-level, perceptual cognition that is associated with the lower parts of the soul (or the cognition of the body, perhaps, in the *Phaedo*). These investigations will at times invite us to compare the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* with the *Republic*, so some prior knowledge of the *Republic* will be useful, but our primary aim will be to understand the dialogues on their own terms.

A further special topic of interest will be Plato's view of the relationship between our bodily, appetitive life and our rational life, and especially his view of the role of contemplation, *theôria*, in a good life. This will be great preparation for anyone who wishes to attend the meeting of the International Plato Society, May 11th to 13th, at METU, which is on the topic *Theôria* as Cognition in Plato.

As with other courses in this series, I've chosen this topic not as something I already know intimately, but as something new that we will explore together, as fellow researchers. Given this, much of the course will aim to show you how to be a researcher: how to read a text closely, how to find good papers on the text, and, ultimately, how to write a significant research paper. The latter is a big task, but the course will take you through it in three stages: an outline that we will discuss; a first draft, on which you'll get detailed comments; and a final draft.

Required texts: Plato's *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Student hours: TUE 14.00–15.00 | *Office:* SOS 162 | *Email:* dstorey@ku.edu.tr

I'm also always happy to answer questions by email. And I can usually make time to see students, either virtually or in my office, outside of my student hours—drop by or arrange a meeting.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a graduate course that is closer to a research seminar than a lecture. Every student must do the weekly reading carefully. I will ensure that the reading is both interesting and not too burdensome: about one article and a section of Plato per week.

Students are expected to practice independent research skills. Minimally, this means that you can find an article (i.e. you don't need me to spoon feed all the reading to you by putting it on Blackboard). More substantially, this means being able to find relevant and high quality research articles without a reading list from me (as you'll be expected to do in the second half of this course).

ASSESSMENT METHODS

1. (25%) *Paper prep.* You will each choose a relevant scholarly article, give a 10–15 minute presentation to the class, and answer questions on it. (*Grading.* Letter grade, F to A+.)
2. (10%) *Essay outline* Between 1000 and 1500 words (about three single-spaced pages). (*Grading for all essays:* letter grade, F to A+.) *Due end (i.e. Sunday midnight) of week 8.*
3. (25%) *Essay 1A.* 1500–2000 words. *Due end of week 10.*
4. (40%) *Essay 2A.* 2000–3000 words: rewrite of essay 1A. *Due end of week 14.*

A+	—	Exceptional/almost publishable
A	4.00	Exceeds expectations
A–	3.70	Meets expectations
B+	3.30	Close to meeting expectations
B	3.00	Below expectations
F	0.00	Failing

COURSE POLICIES

Course material. All required reading will be on Blackboard at least a week prior to the relevant lecture. Optional reading will not usually be on BB, but both the library and the internet exist.

Late work. Late essays will not be accepted.

Extensions and exemptions. Extensions and exemptions are possible (though not guaranteed) if *both* of two conditions are met: (a) they are for official academic or medical reasons (with appropriate documentation) and (b) I am made aware of the request *before* the due date.

Assessments and grades. All students have the opportunity to attempt the same assessments and their final grade reflects the academic merit of the work they produce. Students cannot achieve grades in *any other way*.

Referencing and plagiarism. Any plagiarism—even if it is just a couple of lines and *even if it is accidental*—results in immediate failure of the entire course, with no second chances. It is a

requirement of this course that by the end of the first week you have read and understood the section 'plagiarism' at the end of this document.

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Plato's epistemology, psychology, and ethics

Week 1

- By this week, you should have read at least the entirety of the *Phaedo*.
- As a refresher, you might look at some relevant Stanford Encyclopedia articles, like the following.
- Allan Silverman, [Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology](#)
- Hendrik Lorenz, [Ancient Theories of Soul](#)
- Dorothea Frede, [Plato's Ethics: An Overview](#).

2. READING THE PHAEDO AND PHAEDRUS

2.1 Phaedo 1

Week 2

- Plato *Phaedo* 63E–67C

2.2 Phaedo 2

Week 3

- Plato *Phaedo* 73E–77A

2.3 Phaedo 3

Week 4

- Plato *Phaedo* 77B–84B

2.4 Phaedrus 1

Week 5

- Plato *Phaedo* 92E–95A
- Plato *Phaedrus* 245C–257A

3. STUDENT-FOUND PAPERS

3.1 Paper 1

Week 6

- Gail Fine (2021) 'Epistēmē and Doxa, Knowledge and Belief, in the *Phaedo*' in *Fine Essays in Ancient Epistemology* (OUP: Oxford, 2021)
- See also (optional): Gail Fine (2016) 'The 'Two Worlds' Theory in the *Phaedo*' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24: 557-572
- See also (optional): Gail Fine (2017) 'Plato on the Grades of Perception: *Theaetetus* 184–186 and the *Phaedo*' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 53: 65–109.

Winter break/No class

Week 7

3.2 Paper 2

Week 8

- Suzanne Obdrzalek (2012) 'Contemplation and Self-Mastery In Plato's *Phaedrus*' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 42: 77–108

3.2 Paper 3

Week 9

- Jessica Moss (2012) 'Soul-Leading: The Unity of the *Phaedrus*, Again' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 43: 1–23

3.3 Paper 4

Week 10

- Bedu-Addo, J. T. (1991) 'Sense-experience and the Argument for Recollection in Plato's *Phaedo*' *Phronesis* 36 (1): 27–60

3.4 Paper 5

Week 11

- Harte, V. (2006) 'Beware of Imitations: Image Recognition in Plato' in *New Essays on Plato* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales), pp. 21–42.

3.5 Paper 6

Week 12

- Gerson, Lloyd (1987) 'A Note on Tripartition and Immortality in Plato' *Apeiron* 20: 81–96

3.6 Paper 7

Week 13

- Vasiliou, I. (2011) 'From the *Phaedo* to the *Republic*: Plato's Tripartite Soul and the Possibility of Non-Philosophical Virtue' in R. Barney, T. Brennan, and C. Brittain (eds) *Plato and the Divided Self*

3.7 Paper 8

Week 14

- Ebrey, D (2017) 'The Asceticism of the *Phaedo*: Pleasure, Purification, and the Soul's Proper Activity' *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 99: 1–30

3.8 Paper 9

Week 15

- TBD

ESSAY & WRITING ADVICE

WRITING PHILOSOPHY

Please pay close attention to the following advice, especially 1 and 2. They try to cater for the most common and most easily solved problems I find in students' writing. Please take them seriously.

1. *Justify.* Assume that for every claim you make, the reader is asking 'why on earth should I believe that?' In a philosophy essay, there should always be an excellent answer to this question. You should consider this to be, above all else, your aim when writing an essay. The worst thing you can do is to make bold assertions without defending them, and the second worst is to make bold assertions and defend them weakly. Note that this includes interpretive claims: if you write 'Plato believes that p', you need to show your reader, perhaps by giving a supporting quote, that this is indeed something Plato believes.
2. *Explain.* In short: explain *everything*. It should be possible for an intelligent peer who hasn't studied philosophy to fully understand your essay without needing to read the authors you're writing about. For example: if you use a technical term, or discuss an argument or position, you must clearly and fully explain it to your reader. This is partly because good academic writing should be explicit and easily understood, but it is also because your ability to explain the ideas you're discussing—clearly, precisely, and succinctly—is what you're being assessed on. Your readers, including your grader, know that you understand something only if, and to the extent that, you've successfully explained it. You might well know, for example, what a categorical imperative is, but you need to *show* that you know it and how precisely you know it. Explaining even small, simple ideas well is a lot harder than you might think; don't underestimate how important it is, and how much work it takes.

A bad essay: 'p!'

A good essay: 'For reasons x, y, and z, it seems that p.'

An excellent essay: 'Reasons x, y, and z give us good grounds for thinking that p, although someone might offer an objection along the following lines ... However, I think there is a promising response to this objection ...'

3. *Use headings.* Before you start writing, sketch a structure for your essay. When writing, use headings that reflect this structure. A typical essay might have 2–4 headings.
4. *Ensure your conclusions reflect your arguments.* You might have been taught that strong, persuasive prose requires confident assertions, rather than hesitant, qualified ones. But in philosophy your assertions should reflect the actual degree of confidence that is warranted by the evidence you've provided. Decisive arguments are rare—even rarer are decisive arguments in just a few lines of a student's essay. So be careful not to mistake considerations that give us a good reason for believing that p for an argument that shows conclusively that p. A good essay is likely to have a large range of (appropriate)

qualifying phrases: ‘this shows decisively that p’; ‘this is a strong reason to believe that p’; ‘this suggests that p’; ‘this makes it less implausible that p’; and so forth. Be especially careful with strong success verbs like ‘refutes,’ ‘proves,’ or ‘shows.’

5. *Show independence of thought rather than originality.* You might think that in philosophy you ought to express your own unique opinions, different from those of the authors you read. But originality—the simply fact that an idea is new—has little value by itself and should not be your aim. After all, an idea can be both highly original and obviously false. What *has* value is independence of thought. For example, if you agree with the conclusions of a certain author because you fully understand them, have thought critically about their arguments, and have carefully considered alternative possibilities, then you believe nothing original, but you are showing admirable independence of thought.
6. *Be sufficiently detailed.* The topics you’ll consider are large. People write books about them, but you only have a few pages. This presents a challenge: on the one hand, you want to show that you’re familiar with the whole topic; on the other hand, you want to do more than simply scratch the surface, never looking at any one issue in detail. This can be a difficult balance to achieve, but in general it is much better to *err on the side of detail*. One approach might be to devote about the first third of your essay to a more general introduction of the topic and then use the last two-thirds to examine one or two smaller points in much greater detail—you might, for example, focus on *one* argument, premise, or objection that you think is especially important or interesting.
7. *Use quotes correctly.* Especially in historical subjects, including quotes from relevant primary texts can be an excellent way to illustrate, justify, and give some focus to your discussion. One way (of many) to use a quote is the following: make a claim; present a quote that supports the claim; and then explain and interpret the text of the quote in order to *show* that and why it supports your claim. But a caution: never use a quote as a way of *saying* something—rather, a quote should be presented as evidence *about which* you have something to say.

For more guides to essay writing, see Jim Pryor, [Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Essay](#), or this [guide from the Harvard writing center](#).

SOME BASICS OF TYPOGRAPHY

The following are a few typographic conventions worth learning.

1. *Indent paragraphs.* But do not indent the opening paragraph of the document or the first paragraph after a section heading. You may instead—not in addition—separate paragraphs with a blank line, although this is better suited to list-like texts, such as legal documents, than continuous prose.
2. *Use single line spacing.* It’s easier to read. Double spacing is only necessary when a printed copy of you work will be annotated.
3. *A footnote mark is always placed after punctuation.*¹ It is almost always best to place a foot-

1. This includes full stops, commas, colons, semi-colons, and quotations marks.

note at the end of the sentence, after the sentence-ending full stop. Avoid consecutive footnotes; instead, place all information in one footnote if possible.

4. *Correctly indicate titles.* The titles of books and journals should be italicised; the title of articles or papers should be in inverted quotes.
5. *Indicate quotes with either quotation marks or by using a block quote.* Extra flourishes, such as italicising, are unnecessary. And never place a block quote within quotation marks.
6. *Learn the difference between a hyphen (-), en-dash (–), and em-dash (—).* Use an en-dash like ‘to’ in ranges of dates or numbers (e.g. 87–142) and to express certain relationships between words: for example, an ‘on–off switch’ or ‘Irish–American relations’. Either an en- or em-dash can be used to indicate a parenthetical phrase. If you use an en-dash, add a space either side – like so – but em-dashes are always unspaced—like so.
7. *Make ellipses with three full stops separated by spaces.* Like this . . . , with a space either side. You will most commonly use an ellipsis to indicate portions of text that you’ve omitted from quotes. Don’t omit any sentence-ending full stops that precede an ellipsis (i.e. together they make four stops). For example:

[P]articular care needs to be exercised when eliding text to ensure that the sense of the original is not lost . . . A deletion must not result in a statement alien to the original material. . . . Accuracy of sense and emphasis must accompany accuracy of transcription. (CMS, 16th, 13.49)

8. *Use a single space after full-stops.* A double space, once common, is now recognised as unnecessary.

PLAGIARISM

Koç University does not tolerate plagiarism of any kind or degree, whether deliberate or accidental.

Definition

Plagiarism is the inclusion in your work of something that is not your own—such as another author’s ideas or phrases, or AI generated text—without acknowledgement, so that it is presented as your own original contribution. It is entirely *your* responsibility to learn what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Degree of plagiarism

No amount of plagiarism is acceptable: a single plagiarised line in an essay will result in failure, and could result in disciplinary procedures.

Quotation marks

Quotations need to be in quotation marks; otherwise, it is plagiarism, whether or not you cite the author.

Accidental vs. deliberate

Students accused of plagiarism invariably claim it was accidental. That’s irrelevant: the problem is the plagiarism itself, not the motivation behind it. The consequences of allegedly accidental plagiarism are no different from deliberate plagiarism. Frankly, if you are unable to

avoid plagiarism even while sincerely trying, you should not be in a university, just as you should be allowed to drive if you accidentally run people over.

If you are worried that you might be plagiarising, you can always ask me before you submit your work.

Paraphrasing

Read this section very very carefully.

Paraphrasing an author is repeating what they say, but in your own words. Some forms of paraphrasing are acceptable, others are not. One reason to paraphrase is simply to state the author's ideas in your essay, perhaps to support your argument: if you genuinely use your own words and reference the author, this is acceptable. But if you paraphrase because you are unable to describe what they say by yourself—since you do not trust your English, for example, or fully understand them—then you are plagiarising, *even if you cite the author*.

The crucial point is that you should never use paraphrasing as a *writing* tool. Directly using an author's words to construct your own sentences or paragraphs—looking back and forth at what they wrote as you type—will almost certainly result in plagiarism, even if you try to change the words. What should guide you when you are writing is not the author's words, but your understanding of what they mean. As a rule of thumb, ask yourself 'could I have written what I wrote even if I had entirely forgotten the original author's words?' If your answer is no, then you are plagiarising their writing, since a genuine understanding of their ideas will be independent of the words and phrases they use to express them.

Will it help if I tell you I loved your course or beg or cry?

No. I will just fail you harder.