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

Interpreting Plato's Sun, Line, & Cave

DAMIEN STOREY | SPRING 2024 | VERSION 1.4

THIS SYLLABUS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS

CONTENTS

COURSE PARTICULARS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The images of the Sun, Line, and Cave in books 6 and 7 in Plato's *Republic* are among philosophy's best known passages. The Allegory of the Cave has especially captured people's imaginations. Naturally there has been an enormous quantity of scholarship about them over the years, yet there is surprisingly little consensus about what they mean. This is not (or so one could argue) because the images lack a determinate meaning or are described unclearly. Rather, it is because these passages have frequently attracted loose, speculative scholarship. Their mode of expression—analogy, metaphor, and allegory—is more easily misunderstood than plainer speech. There is no textbook that lays out the rules for extracting meaning from analogies and metaphors, and this can lend itself to a sense of interpretive freedom, and a more *laissez faire* approach than would be acceptable for less figurative passages. As a result, imaginative scholars have interpreted the Sun, Line, and Cave as saying all kinds of exciting things.

But figurative language is not vague language. If I accuse you of eating 'like a pig' there is no ambiguity about my meaning. More complex, artistic metaphors will take more work to pin down, and there is a debate about whether they are always paraphrasable, but if we cannot, after some intelligent discussion, figure out the meaning of a metaphor, then it is just a bad metaphor, or perhaps a failed metaphor: is a piece of 'poetic' language a metaphor if it fails to convey any metaphoical meaning? This is especially true for philosophical analogies and metaphors, which are useful only if they explain ideas at least as well as, and preferably better than, non-figurative descriptions.

The aim of this course is to approach the images of the Sun, Line, and Cave as philosophical analogies and metaphors with a determinate meaning that can, with work, be extracted from the text. Accordingly, we will approach the secondary literature with a low tolerance for speculative or imaginative leaps—and even less tolerance for such leaps in our own thinking. This is more difficult than you might think. It requires a very careful and skilled approach to textual interpretation, which you will learn by a combination of trying to interpret the relevant passages in the *Republic* and by closely examining the strengths and weaknesses of others' interpretations.

Required text: Plato's *Republic*

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Office hours: MOWE TBD | *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—drop by or arrange a meeting.

Please *always* refer to me as 'Damien', whether in person or by email. Please never call me Dr. Storey, and certainly not Mr. Storey (I'm not a bank manager).

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a 400/500-level course that is closer to a research seminar than a lecture. Every student must to do the weekly reading carefully. I will ensure that the reading is both interesting and not too burdensome: one or two articles and a section of Plato. If this sounds like too much, this course is not for you.

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 for the final weeks of this course).

ASSESSMENT METHODS: UNDERGRADUATES

1. (25%) *Paper prep*. In the last few weeks of the class, students will (either individually or in a group) 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 1A*. Between 500 and 1000 words (about two single-spaced pages). Question: 'How should we interpret Plato's Sun Analogy in *Republic* book 6?' (*Grading for all essays*. Letter grade, F to A+.) *Due end (i.e. Sunday midnight) of week 4.*
3. (15%) *Essay 1B*. 500–1000 words: rewrite of essay 1A. *Due end of week 7.*
4. (20%) *Essay 2A*. 1000–1500 words: topic you choose. *Due end of week 10.*
5. (30%) *Essay 2B*. 1000–2000 words: rewrite of essay 2A. *Friday of week 15.*
6. *Reading skills.* Full marks require decent comprehension of most week's reading. This means that each week you attend at least one lecture in which you demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the reading. You can fail reading comprehension in four weeks; after that, you lose 0.2 of your overall GPA grade per failure. *(Note: really this just means that you need to make at least one reasonably useful contribution to class discussion in most weeks. But it also means that if you generally do not join class discussions, you will fail this course.)*

A+	——	Exceptional/almost publishable
A	4.00	Superior
A–	3.70	Above Average
B+	3.30	Above Average
B	3.00	Average
B–	2.70	Average
C+	2.30	Below Average
C	2.00	Below Average
C–	1.70	Borderline
D+	1.30	Deficient
D	1.00	Deficient
F	0.00	Failing

ASSESSMENT METHODS: GRADUATES

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 1A*. Between 1000 and 1500 words (about three single-spaced pages). Question: 'How should we interpret Plato's Sun Analogy in *Republic* book 6?' (*Grading for all essays.* Letter grade, F to A+.) *Due end (i.e. Sunday midnight) of week 4.*
3. (15%) *Essay 1B*. 1500–2000 words: rewrite of 1A. *Due end of week 7.*
4. (20%) *Essay 2A*. 1500–2000 words: topic you choose. *Due end of week 10.*
5. (30%) *Essay 2B*. 2500–3000 words: rewrite of essay 2A. *Friday of week 15.*

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 section, Plagiarism, below (p. 12).**

English coherence rule. From your first day as a fresher, you are expected to be able to write in English, even if it is bad English. I am very forgiving about language errors, and they do not effect your grade except insofar as they make your writing imprecise or unclear. However, if your English is highly unusual, so that it appears not to have arisen from a normal process of writing—i.e. not to have arisen from you using what English you have to try to say what you mean—there will be a significant marking penalty. Examples might be the incoherent sentences sometimes produced using Google Translate or by paraphrasing with a thesaurus.

AI and writing tools. Using AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for any purpose—*even for reseach for written work*—is forbidden and is considered plagiarism. Moreover, using *any* tool to help you write other than a word processor like MS Word or LaTeX—even tools like Grammerly, Google Translate, or the various paraphrasing tools—is forbidden and results in failure of that component.

GENERAL READING

First and foremost, read the *Republic*. There are plenty of copies of the *Republic* in the campus bookshop and library. Good translations include Grube (revised by Reeve) (Hackett); Reeve (Hackett); and Rowe (Penguin).

Please read Plato's *Republic* at least once—ideally, multiple times—*before* the first lecture.

Collections that give some background to Plato include:

- Hugh Benson (ed.) *A Companion to Plato* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)
- Richard Kraut (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992)

Some general introductions or collections on Plato's *Republic* include:

- J. Annas *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: OUP, 1981)
- Nickolas Pappas *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (Routledge, 2003)
- G. R. F. Ferrari (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (CUP, 2007)
- M. L. Mcpherran (ed.) *Plato's Republic: A Critical Guide* (CUP, 2010)
- G. Santas (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)

LECTURE OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Philosophy, analogy, and metaphor
Week 1: Lecture 1 & 2

- Read the syllabus fully and carefully.
- Plato, *Republic*, books 6 and 7 (but read as much as the *Republic* as you can)
- Find a definitions of: analogy; metaphor; allegory; metonymy; synecdoche; irony (verbal and situational); and sarcasm.
- Optional: William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd edition (Routledge: Oxford, 2008), chapter 14 (on metaphor)

1.2 Plato's epistemology and metaphysics
Week 2: Lecture 3 & 4

- Plato, *Republic*, concentrating on knowledge and belief in book 5
- David Lee (2010) 'Interpreting Plato's Republic: Knowledge and Belief' *Philosophy Compass* 5/10: 854–864

1.3 Education in the *Republic*
Week 3: Lecture 5 & 6

- Plato, *Republic*, books 2–7.
- Gill, Christopher (1985) 'Plato and the Education of Character '*Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* 67/1, 1–26.
- Optional: Damien Storey (2022) 'The Soul-Turning Metaphor in Plato's *Republic* Book 7' *Classical Philology* 177 (3): 525-542

1.4 The Sun, Line, & Cave
Week 4: Lecture 7 & 8

- Plato, *Republic*, books 6 and 7 (read again and again).
- Malcolm, J. (1962), 'The Line and the Cave', *Phronesis*, 7, 38–45.
- Cross, R. C. and A. D. Woozley (1964) *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London), chapter 9 and (grads only) chapter 10
- (Grads only) Malcolm, J. (1981), 'The Cave Revisited', *The Classical Quarterly*, 31, 60–68.
- (Optional, but useful for the first essay) G. Fine 'Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V–VII' in G. Fine (ed.) *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Oxford: OUP, 1999)

2. PAPERS

2.1 Early papers: Jackson and Stocks
Week 5: Lecture 9 & 10

– Jackson, H. (1881), 'On Plato's *Republic* VI 509 d sqq.', *The Journal of Philology*, 10, 132–150.
– Stocks, J. L. (1911), 'The Divided Line of Plato *Rep*. VI', *Classical Quarterly*, 5, 73–88.

2.2 Early paper: Ferguson
Week 6: Lecture 11 & 12

– Ferguson, A. S. (1921), 'Plato's Simile of Light. Part I', *Classical Quarterly*, 15, 131–152.
– Ferguson, A. S. (1922), 'Plato's Simile of Light. Part II. The Allegory of the Cave (Continued)', *Classical Quarterly*, 16, 15–28.
– (Grads only) Ferguson, A. S. (1934), 'Plato's Simile of Light Again', *Classical Quarterly*, 28, 190–120.

2.3 Burnyeat on Mathematics and the Good
Week 7: Lecture 13 & 14

– M. F. Burnyeat 'Platonism and Mathematics: A Prelude to Discussion' in Graeser, Andreas (ed) *Mathematics and Metaphysics in Aristotle* (Paul Haupt: Bern and Stuttgart), 145–172

2.4 *Eikasia* and the Line
Week 8: Lecture 15 & 16

– Storey (2020) 'What is *Eikasia*?' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 58, 19–57
– Optional: Storey (2022) *Dianoia* & Plato's Divided Line *Phronesis* 67 (3): 253-308. 2022.

3. STUDENT-FOUND PAPERS

3.1 Paper 1
Week 9: Lecture 17 & 18

– Vassilis Karasmanis (1988) 'Plato's Republic: The Line and the Cave' *Apeiron* 21, 147–71

3.2 Paper 2
Week 10: Lecture 19 & 20

– Hosle, P. (2020) 'The allegory of the cave, the ending of the republic, and the stages of moral enlightenment' *Philologus*, 164, 66–82

3.2 Paper 3
Week 11: Lecture 21 & 22

– Samuel C. Wheeler III (1997) 'Plato's Enlightenment: The Good as the Sun' *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14, 171–88

3.3 Paper 4
Week 12: Lecture 23 & 24

– Barney, Rachel (2008) 'Eros and Necessity in the Ascent from the Cave' *Ancient Philosophy* 28, 357–72

3.4 Paper 5

Week 13: Lecture 25 & 26

- Wilberding, James (2004) 'Prisoners and Puppeteers in the Cave' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 27, 117–39

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. *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 that has particular significance for an author, make sure you clearly define or explain it. Similarly, for any argument or position you discuss, 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, inclusing your grader, know that you understand something only if, and to the extent that, you've succesfully explained it. Don't expect anyone to just assume you understand something that you've failed to explain. 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.

2. *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.

   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. *First understand, then assess*. Be careful not to rush into criticisms of what you read before you've fully understood it. Approach everything you read with charity. That is, assume that the author has thought intelligently and carefully about what they've written, so is unlikely to have made obvious mistakes. For example, if you notice a *prima facie* objection to something you're reading, read it again carefully to see if there's a way

to understand it that avoids the objection or try to think of a plausible implicit assumption the author might have made that caters for the objection.

5. *Be sufficiently detailed*. The topics you'll consider are broad. Someone could write hundreds of pages about them, but you have at most 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.

6. *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'.

7. *Show 'independence of thought' rather than 'originality'*. You might think that philosophy encourages you to express your own unique opinions, ones different from those of the authors you read. But originality—the simply fact that an idea is new—has little value by itself and it should not be your aim. After all, an idea can be both 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 carefully assessed alternative possibilities, then you believe nothing original, but you are showing admirable independence of thought.

8. *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 two cautions: first, quotes from secondary sources are rarely useful; second, *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 footnote at the end of the sentence, *after* the sentence-ending full stop, even if you are referring to something earlier in the sentence. 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 rightly recognised as unnecessary.

REFERENCING

In your essays you should reference both quotes and claims or arguments that originate from one of the authors you've been reading. You should also have a bibliography of all the works you've referred to in the text.

You can use whatever bibliographical style you choose, so long as it's consistent. The following is an example of a typical author–year referencing style, starting with what the bibliography will look like:

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

Book: Author (Year) *Title*, Place: Publisher.

> Fine, G. (1993) *On Ideas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
>
> Freeman, S. (ed.) (2003) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Article: Author (Year) 'Title', *Journal*, Volume, pp. Pages.

> Irwin, T.H. (1977) 'Plato's Heracleiteanism', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 27, pp. 1–13.

Article in book: Author (Year) 'Article Title' in Editor(s) (ed(s).) *Book Title*, Place: Publisher.

> Scanlon, T.M. (2003) 'Rawls on Justification' in S. Freeman (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

In-text citation: (Author, Year, Page(s))

> It has been argued that the charge of conservatism laid against Rawls' idea of reflective equilibrium is unsound (Scanlon, 2003, pp. 150–151).
>
> Scanlon argues that the charge of conservatism laid against Rawls' reflective equilibrium is unsound (2003, pp. 150–151).

PLAGIARISM

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

Definition

The inclusion in your writing of text or ideas that are not you own—such as another author's ideas or phrases, or AI generated text—without acknowledgement, so that it is presented as your own work. 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 about an author's ideas is not the words they use, 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 orginal author's words?' If your answer is no, then you are probably 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.