

## Ancient Philosophy: Plato's *Republic* | PIU33012

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| Year                     | Junior Sophisters                                    |
| ECTS Credits             | 10   |
| Contact Hours            | 22 (11 x 2-hour lectures)                            |
| Pre-requisite            | None   |
| Semester                 | 2  |
| Module Leader & Lecturer | Professor Vasilis Politis                            |
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### Module Outline:

The aim of these seminars is to study Plato's dialogue, *Republic*. This is one of the richest and most rewarding works in philosophy, but it is also long and winding, often difficult to follow the argument of, and very difficult to find one's way around in. Plato's *Republic* poses the questions: What is justice? And is it better to be just or unjust? The emphasis is always on justice/injustice in the sense of the just/unjust person, his or her soul and self, rather than just/unjust actions.

One major theme is the debate between Socrates, who argues that the just person is better than the unjust, and Thrasymachus, who argues that the unjust person is clearly the better of the two. Another major theme is that of the soul: its nature, its structure and what is good and bad for it. For Plato, the soul is basically oneself and one's self. And for Plato, the self is not something we simply possess, it is something we need to work on to possess: we need to work on becoming who we are.

Another major theme is Plato's account of what there is (=the theory of essences and Forms + sense-perceptible things) and what knowledge is. The *Republic* contains what may be less major but no less interesting themes: The place of women in society and among the rulers of society. The pathological degeneration of society, and of the self/soul, when things go wrong. The journey of the soul after death.

### Assessment:

2 Essays 50%. One after Reading Week and one at the end of term.

1 Online 5-hour Examination, with 2 questions to be answered, (end of module). 50% of the overall mark.

### Recommended Reading List:

- Plato: *Republic* (either the translation by Grube, which is in ed. Cooper, *Plato. Complete Works*, or that by Christopher Rowe, which is in the Penguin Books series). There is a vast secondary literature on Plato's *Republic*. We will need to proceed very selectively—also for the sake of concentrating above all on Plato's text itself and avoiding getting



bogged down, or unduly influenced, by secondary literature. A selection of secondary literature on Plato's *Republic* will be distributed at the beginning of the course.

- N. Pappas. *Plato and the Republic*
- *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari.