



Virtue and Knowledge in the *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics*

CLAS/PHIL 260 | Spring 2019 | Current 01/29/19 | Bjorn Sether Wastvedt

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I respond to all emails each weekday.
Class: MWF 2:00-2:48 in Harvill 404

Office Hours:

Bjorn: W 3-4 SBS 138 & F 3-4 H404

Alex: MW 12:30-1:30 SBS 138

Hayden: MW 3-4 SBS 138

Description and Objectives

Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's two *Ethics* endure as the cornerstones of western philosophy. In this class, we will focus on two major topics in these works: virtue and knowledge. On these topics especially, our own problems do not differ greatly from the ancients'. We ask many of the same ethical

questions: What should we want, and how should we act? How can we live well? What will make us happy, and what is happiness? What is the place of friendship, of others generally, in the good life? What is justice? self-control? wisdom? Our answers to these still depend on questions about knowledge: What kinds of things can we know, and what can we only believe or imagine? Of all of these things, which are most worth investigating? Does knowledge require a teacher, and if we know something, can we teach it? How do we learn: by studying, by experiencing, by doing?

We will aim to improve your ability to think, discuss, and write, doing so creatively and critically. This will be philosophically, emotionally, and ethically difficult, so it is important to create a tolerant and open environment where the expression of ideas does not lead to bullying or discrimination. Good philosophy requires sharing intellectual views, discussing principles and their applications, and expressing and defending well-formed opinions. Virtue, and academic integrity, requires all of this.

Requirements

You may submit work early or on time. Early work correlates with high grades. Required hard copies:
ISBN 978-0872207370. Plato, *Republic* (ed. Reeve). Hackett Classics, 3rd Ed., 2004. [This cover](#); on [Amazon](#)
978-1107612235. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (ed. Crisp). Cambridge, 2nd/Rev. Ed., 2014. [Cover](#); [Amazon](#)

*I will return all work within one week. You may always rewrite papers for reevaluation.

*You may attend class at most three times a week. You may miss class at most three times a semester.

*Unless pre-approved, each extra absence lowers your grade by 5% and late assignments earn a 50%.

*You may appeal a grade by giving me a written justification within one week from the grade's posting.

*You must make use of UA's writing services (in-person/online) for one of the papers. Fill out [this form](#).

The class will proceed in segments of three meetings, on Friday, Monday, and Wednesday. Before Friday's class, you will watch a video lecture and complete a short but challenging reading. These can be done well in advance. An individual D2L quiz (due before Friday's class) will be repeated in teams in class. We will then work through the material together and in groups. There will be no homework over the weekend. We will start a team activity on Monday to be finished by the end of class on Wednesday.

D2L Quizzes (12 100pt; drop two) are open-book/note/internet: average of ind. score & team score (25%)
Team projects (2 major; multiple minor): letter-grades, weighted by grade given by teammates (35%)
Papers (multiple minor) (2 major: 1000w+ draft, FCAs, office hour review; letter-grade revision) (40%)¹

Policies (fine print – but this could be important for you)

Code of Academic Integrity: Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort

unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to follow the Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog.

Absence and Class Participation Policy: The UA's policy concerning Class

¹ These weights by consensus, 1/25/19. A+=100; A=95; A-/B+=90; B=85; B-/C+=80; C=75; C-/D+=70; D=65. It is impossible to earn less than an E (55) on completed work. Posted grades are A>=89.5>B>=79.5>C>=69.5>D>=59.5>E.

Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available here. The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable. Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or dean's designee) will be honored.

Threatening Behavior Policy: The UA Threatening Behavior by Students policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself.

Accessibility and Accommodations: Our goal in this classroom is that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. See here for additional information on the Disability Resource Center and reasonable accommodations. If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and

how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate. Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

UA Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy: The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination. Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. We also want to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

Subject to Change Statement: Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor. Also, since this is a writing intensive, Tier 2 General Education course, you will write 3000 words total for the papers on Plato and on Aristotle, both of which will involve revisions.

Virtue in Plato's Republic²

1/9: Plato and Cicero readings in class (on D2L)

1/11, 1/14, 1/16: What is justice; why be just? (T)³
Definitions (1, 327a-336b); Thrasymachus' (1, 336b-344c); Justice & happiness (1, 352d-354a); Glaucon & Adeimantus' challenge (2, 357a-361d)

(MLK day): 1/18, 1/23: City and individual (W)

Socrates on justice in the city (2, 367e-369b)
Virtue in the city and in the soul (4, 427c-445e)
The metaphor; philosopher kings (5, 471c-474c)

1/25, 1/28, 1/30²: Constitutions and lives (T)

Four kinds of constitution (8, 543a-545c)
Comparison of lives (9, 576b-592b)
(In)justice in life and death (10, 612b-621d)

Knowledge in Plato's Republic

2/1, 2/4, 2/6: The philosopher's knowledge (W)

Two worlds? (5, 474c-480a)
The philosopher as ruler (6, 484a-504a)
The Good, the sun, the divided line (6, 504a-511e)

2/8, 2/11, 2/13: Truth: the what and the how (T)

The allegory of the cave (7, 514a-521b)
The curriculum (7, 521c-541b)

Plato Project: 2/15, 2/18, 2/20², 2/22

Plato Paper: Idea by 2/22, draft by 2/27, mandatory conferences 2/28-3/1; revision by TBA

Ethical Knowledge in Aristotle

3/11, 3/13: How and what to know (on D2L) (W)

Nature and its causes: *Physics* 2.1-3, 7-8
Knowledge and wisdom: *Metaphysics* 1.1-3
Against Plato on the forms: *Metaphysics* 1.6-7

3/15, 3/18, 3/20: Ethics: knowledge and method (T)

Passages from *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *De Anima*, and both *Ethics* (on D2L)

Virtue in Aristotle's Two Ethics

3/22, 3/25, 3/27: Determining the human good (W)

Ethical inquiry: NE 1.1-1.3

Eudaimonia: NE 1.4-1.13

3/29, 4/1, 4/3: Moral virtue and the mean (T)

A first attempt: EE 2.1.19-2.5 (on D2L)

Aristotle's revision: NE 2.1-2.9

4/5², 4/8, 4/10: Rationality and virtue (W)

Choice, deliberation, wish, responsibility: NE 3.2-5

Practical wisdom: NE 6

Theoretical wisdom NE 10.6-8, EE 3.8 (on D2L)

4/12², 4/15, 4/17: Pleasure

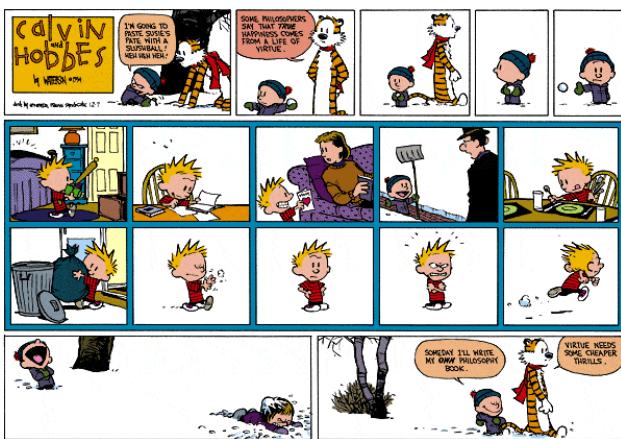
(In)temperance and (in)continence: NE 7 (T)³

The virtues*: NE 3.6-4.9, EE 2.3, 3; NE 8-9, EE 7

*Each group reads part of this. For EE, see D2L.

Aristotle Project: 4/19, 4/22, 4/24

Aristotle Assessment: Idea by 4/24, draft by 4/29, mandatory conf. 4/29-30; revision by 5/3, 1pm
Final (low stress; attendance required) ([5/3, 1-3pm](#))



2 No office hours (Bjorn) on these days

3 "(T)" weeks: projects on MW; "(W)" weeks: writing on M and before W, individually, but also edited in groups.