

Professor Stuart Warner
Spring 2011
Roosevelt University
Philosophy 370

Plato's *Republic*

Course Description

This is a one book course. This statement should be taken seriously. We are reading one book, which means, at least to some extent, that we want to come to an understanding of what makes that book *a* book, a single, unified work. Now, the work in question, the *Republic*, makes matters hard for us—in part because it is a dialogue in which the author does not speak in his own name, and in part because it casts a net over an immense philosophical landscape.

The central question of the *Republic* is well known—What is justice? However hard this question might seem, it turns out to be harder still, especially after it is divided into two questions: What is justice in the city? and What is justice in the individual? These two questions require us to come to some understanding of what a city is as well as what an individual is. In pursuing these matters, we will inextricably be led to wonder what the *good* for the city is and what the *good* for the individual is, and whether justice is consistent with those or not. But note that in coming to know what something *is*, we are required to reflect upon being itself—what it means for something to exist and the various ways in which things might exist. Such a reflection requires, of course, that we investigate how we might come to know such things, and thus what knowledge is, and all of this propels us along the path of asking . . . well, I think you have the idea. And thus the significance of the famous (and often misquoted) remark of Alfred North Whitehead: “The safest generalization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” This semester we will leave the footnotes aside and turn directly to Plato and his most famous work. If we only scratch the surface of the *Republic*, which is where one should always begin, our rewards will be many.

Book

Plato, *Republic* (Basic Books; Bloom translation)

Reading Assignments

January 10 Book I
January 12 Book I

January 19	Book I
January 24	Book II
January 26	Book II
January 31	Book II
February 2	Book III
February 7	Book III
February 9	Book IV
February 14	Book IV
February 16	Book IV
February 21	Book V
February 23	Book V
February 28	Book VI
March 2	Book VI
March 14	Book VI
March 16	Book VII
March 21	Book VII
March 23	Book VII
March 28	Book VIII
March 30	Book VIII
April 4	Book VIII
April 6	Book IX
April 11	Book IX
April 13	Book IX
April 18	Book X
April 20	Book X