

HUMA 11500: Philosophical Perspectives I

Course Syllabus: Autumn 2025

Time/Location: T/TH 11-12:20, in Wiebolt 111

Instructor: John Proios (jdproios@uchicago.edu), Stuart 231-B

Office Hours: W 2-3:30, TH 2:30-3:30, in Stuart 231-B or via Zoom.

Sign up for office hours here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ikp80Allk33SCV47prNbqxUg1y5hwNYj0QIdGz2mFLQ/edit?usp=sharing>

Course Description:

In Autumn Quarter, we examine fundamental ethical issues--about virtue, the good life, and the role of the individual in society--in the works of ancient Greek writers as well as 20th-century writers in conversation with them. Texts are drawn from Plato, Aristotle, the Greek tragedians, Martin Luther King and others.

Required Texts

Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett Publishing, translated by G.M.A. Grube)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford World Classics, translated by W.D. Ross)

Sophocles, *Theban Plays* (Hackett Publishing, translated by Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff)

Library Reserves:

The library has made all texts available in some form through the "Library Reserves" tab on Canvas.

Course Goals:

- Develop reading habits appropriate for the style and content of ancient Greek plays and philosophical texts
- Explore ancient Greek texts through the lens of contemporary society
- Explore concepts such as fate, ignorance, self-knowledge, happiness, death, and justice, in a way that is rooted in the course texts
- Develop skills at critical thinking and dialogue through discussion, writing, and presentations
- Write short essays articulating core ideas from a text and clearly expressing original ideas about them.

Assignments/Grades:

10%: Attendance

This grade is earned by attending all regular class meetings and any sections. If you miss one class, you lose half this grade; if you miss two, you lose the remaining half. The only exceptions are (1) if you miss class for a religious holiday or (2) if you are ill. Absences of kinds (1) or (2) do not count on your attendance record, but you need to let me know in advance.

15% Participation

Your participation grade measures your engagement in class discussions and assignments, such as in-class written assignments and other group-based work. I realize people participate in different ways and do not have universal expectations that you will be extremely vocal. I am looking for an effort to share in the class activities of discussion, analysis, writing, etc. Please note that coming to office hours does not count towards this grade.

****Writing Seminars:** students are required to attend 3 writing seminars scheduled around paper due dates. These are led by the Writing Specialist and provide opportunities for draft feedback and other forms of writing instruction. **All writing workshops are mandatory. *This is a requirement for graduation.*****

15% In-Class Presentations

Each student must sign up to co-present a passage of interest from the assigned material. I will assign co-presenters. Students must submit a short document outlining their notes for the session. (This can be brief: less than a page. It can be bullet points. But it should explain to me your main ideas for how to lead the class discussion.)

Sign-Up and Guide Here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jJtHvv8ztFuFGR1sgu2RAfsepWnCAv88olP_PDUNo5NI/edit?usp=drive_link

25% Take-home paper

~3 pages, double-spaced, in response to prompt, due on Canvas.

30% Final Exam

In-person exam, consisting in an essay in response to a choice of prompts.

5% Annotated Bibliography

Locate one book and one journal article that address at least one of the texts covered in the course. Compile accurate citation information (MLA style) and write at least one paragraph explaining the content of this resource and what it contributes to understanding the primary text.

Course Expectations:

1. Engage in honest, respectful dialogue. Do not interrupt each other or have private conversations while others are speaking. Please read through the philosophy department discussion norms here:
<https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/philosophy/prod/2020-05/Norms%20April%202020.pdf>
2. Complete all reading assignments before class and have the text accessible during class.

3. Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism is *representing someone else's idea or work as your own* (even in a piece-meal way). The penalty for plagiarism will depend on the specific circumstances, but no plagiarized work will be accepted for any credit. The standard penalty is failure for the assignment and/or the course. Please consult the University of Chicago guidelines: <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/>
4. Electronic devices (laptops & tablets) are **only allowed for the purposes of accessing the reading**. Otherwise, **no electronic devices are allowed**. I will make **exceptions** for SDS accommodations or if you write to me to explain why it is essential that you be able to take notes on a laptop or tablet.
5. One crucial task of the Humanities Core Sequence is to help you learn to organize and express complex ideas in writing. While LLMs can be useful for certain purposes, their use in this class would tend to inhibit the development of skills and habits of reading and thinking that we aim to cultivate. **Use of Grammarly, and of LLMs such as ChatGPT and Pheonix AI, is prohibited for the purposes of (1) reading, (2) summarizing, (3) constructing outlines, (4) constructing arguments, (5) composing sentences**. If you are unclear about whether something is an AI tool, please check with the instructor. Using AI tools for any unauthorized purposes will be considered a violation of the University's [academic integrity policy](#)
6. Recording of class is prohibited (I do not give permission) unless specifically arranged through SDS.

The Role of Writing in the Course:

An important goal of this course is for you to develop skills at writing academic essays. The Writing Specialist will hold **3 mandatory writing seminars** designed to help you develop these skills and prepare you to write or revise the papers in the class.

In addition to our Writing Specialist, there are writing tutors available by appointment: see <https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/writing-support/ccwt/>.

Support for students for whom English is a second language is available through the English Language Institute, with special ESL writing tutors just for courses like ours: <https://esl.uchicago.edu/writing/>.

Student Services:

Disabilities: I intend for this course to be accessible to all students and am eager to work with disabled students on any issues that arise. If you are able to register with Student Disability Services (SDS), then you will qualify for the use of academic accommodations arranged by SDS. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. To contact SDS: website: disabilities.uchicago.edu phone: (773) 702-6000 email: disabilities@uchicago.edu. Whether or not you choose to use SDS I encourage you to let me know about any ways the course-design poses problems for you due to a disability.

I realize there may be other barriers to participation: you might be worried about paying for books or other necessities, or have childcare or other family-care responsibilities. If at any point a personal circumstance like this affects your ability to participate in this course, please contact me so we can discuss how to manage the issue with the least impact on your learning.

Mental Health: Students can access mental health care and other health care through the UChicago Student Wellness office: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/>

Student Support Services is an office at the University which “aims to facilitate the personal, professional and social success of first-generation, lower-income, undocumented, and immigrant students”. For instance, they have several programs to assist with food insecurity and have compiled resources for undocumented students. Website: <https://inclusion.uchicago.edu/studentsupport/>

Pronouns:

Feel free to share your preferred pronouns at the beginning of class or before speaking; I welcome any requests to be referred to in a specific way. My preferred pronouns are he/him/his.

Schedule of Assignments (subject to change)

Date	Reading	Writing
Week 1 (09/29)	Tuesday: N/A Thursday: Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (read through 8b)	
Week 2 (10/06)	Tuesday: Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (finish) Thursday: Plato, <i>Apology</i> (through 26a)	
Week 3 (10/13)	Tuesday: Plato, <i>Apology</i> (finish) Thursday: NO CLASS	Take-home paper prompt released Writing seminars
Week 4 (10/20)	Tuesday: MLK Jr., <i>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</i> (Canvas); Letter from Alabama Clergymen (Canvas); watch <i>Eyes on the Prize</i> (Canvas, “Library Reserves” tab) Thursday: Plato, <i>Crito</i>	Writing seminars Take-home paper due Sunday
Week 5 (10/27)	Tuesday: Plato, <i>Republic</i> 514a-517c (on Canvas) Selection from Huey P. Newton, <i>Revolutionary Suicide</i> (on Canvas) Thursday: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1-5, 1.7-8	

Week 6 (11/03)	Tuesday: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.13, II.1-6, III.2-4 Thursday: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VI	Writing seminars
Week 7 (11/10)	Tuesday: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> X.6-9 Thursday: Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> I.1-7, I.12-13 (Canvas)	
Week 8 (11/17)	Tuesday: Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i> Thursday: Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i>	
Week 9 (11/24) NO CLASS		
Week 10 (12/01)	Tuesday: Library Instruction (meet in Regenstein Library) Thursday: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.9-12	Thursday, in-class writing practice for final exam. Friday (12/05) Annotated Bibliography due
Week 11 (12/08)		Final Exam Thursday, 12/11, 10am-12pm in WB 111