FIL4560
Fall 2021

Plato's *Republic*

Plato' *Republic* is arguably the most influential philosophical work in the
Western tradition. One of its accomplishments is to have attempted—probably
the first such attempt in history—to give a unified account of just about
everything: what there is and isn't, knowledge, ignorance, values and the good
(and the bad) society. We are going to study it in this course. It is a fairly long
work, divided into ten books of about 40 pages each. It presents a powerful view
of the human condition in the light of a metaphysics that has the Good as its first
principle. Although we won't be able to study all parts of the work with equal
attention to detail, we are going to pay attention to the big lines in its
argumentation. The seminars will run as follows:

1. The *Republic*, an introduction.
2. Does justice pay? What is justice? The discussion with Cephalus,
   Polemarchus and Thrasymachus in book I.
3. The discussion with Tharsymachus continued.
4. Arguments in book II till 368e claiming that justice in itself does not pay;
   it valued only because of its consequences. This is a central, arguably the
   central, question of the *Republic*, that Plato repeatedly returns to.
5. The set-up of Socrates' response: let us start with the city. (368e–371b).
   Character, virtues and vices and philosophy of education III, 386a–412a.
6. The *Republic* theory of the threepartite soul and the analogy of the soul
   and the city. Book IV. Has it been satisfactorily shown that justice pays.
7. The theory of knowledge and the metaphysics of books V, VI and VII.
   degrees of reality and cognition 471c–480a. The Form of the Good and the
   the Sun, the Divided Line and the Cave. The notion of dialectic and the
   method of hypothesis VI, 501a–VII, 541b.
8. The same continued.
9. The corrupt constitutions: character, actions and cities. Voting for the best
   life. (Books VII and IX, special focus on 479c-492b.)
10. The status of the imitative arts in book X, 595a–608c. The Myth of Er.
11. Issues to be continued or readdressed.
12. General discussion.