

**PHILOSOPHY 9037B: DEVELOPMENT OF PLATO'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**  
Department of Philosophy  
Winter 2017

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### **Course Description**

In this course we will explore Plato's political philosophy from its origins in Socratic philosophy, through the *Republic*, and culminating in the *Statesman* and *Laws*. Political philosophy as a discipline was invented by Plato. The Platonic corpus as a whole contains reflections on the origins of political institutions, the concepts used to interpret and organize political life, the meaning and value of justice, the relation between the aims of ethics and politics, and the merits of political expertise as an antidote to the power of rhetoric. The course will examine such questions as: What is justice? What are the goals of a just society? What motivates people to act justly? Indeed, why should one be just? Why should I obey the laws of the state, and what are the limits (if any) to my obligation? What if a law requires the citizen to perform an act that she correctly believes is unjust? Is civil disobedience justified in these cases or should the citizen always obey the commands of the state without question? What was Plato's attitude towards democracy? Was he openly hostile to it, or was he a champion of open societies and a friend of democratic politics? Was his political philosophy authoritarian, and if so, how strong was his authoritarian streak? What form of government is best? How should political offices be distributed? How is moral and political reform achieved? What role should the state play in the moral education of its citizens? What is the relation between citizen and state? Is the happiness of the individual to be subordinated to the good of the state?

### **Required Texts**

Plato: Complete Works, ed. John Cooper (Hackett Publishing), ISBN: 0872203492. *Available at the UWO Book Store or [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca).*

### **Course Requirements**

TBA

### **Audit**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.