

The Trial of Socrates

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Course Description

The Athens of 399 B.C.E. was a turbulent place both politically and ideologically. That year saw the death of the infamous Socrates, indicted for corrupting the youth of the city and worshipping false gods. His guilt or innocence is a question not only of historical fact but of philosophical debate. Witness to all of this was Socrates's student Plato, who wrote an account of his teacher's trial and death infused with his own philosophical commitments. In this course, we will attempt to separate the historical man from the philosophical myth as well as understand the legal and political contexts in which these thinkers operated. We will read the four dialogues Plato wrote concerning the trial and execution of Socrates: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*. In the final week, we will take on the roles of the ancient Athenians, accusers and apologists, and judge whether Socrates is guilty of the historical crimes of which he was accused. No previous coursework in philosophy is required for this course.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will have had a brief introduction to ancient philosophy. They will learn to construct and assess arguments for philosophical positions. Doing so will strengthen their critical thinking skills in all disciplines and even outside of academic life. This course will also hone students' skills in public speaking. Finally, it will also function as an introduction to Athens nearing the close of its Golden Age.

Course Requirements & Grading

No textbook is required for this course; all readings will be uploaded to blackboard. You must submit all assignments in order to pass the course. As we only have a few weeks to get through all the material, attendance and participation is crucial. Your grade will be determined based on the following three things:

- Attendance & Participation (25%)
- 3-page Paper due at the beginning of Meeting Four (25%)
- Participation in the Historical Reenactment (50%)

You will receive one of the following grades for the paper: high pass, pass, low pass, or fail. If you receive at least a low pass on the paper and come to class, then you will receive a passing grade for the course.

Course Policies

In this course you will be allowed to use your laptop or tablet to take notes or view the readings on blackboard. Using an electronic device for anything outside of this will result in being marked absent for the day.

A note about academic ethics from the university with which we agree:

Cheating is wrong. Cheating hurts our community by undermining academic integrity, creating mistrust, and fostering unfair competition. The university will punish cheaters with failure on an assignment, failure in a course, permanent transcript notation, suspension, and/or expulsion. Offenses may be reported to medical, law, or other professional or graduate schools when a cheater applies. Violations can include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments without permission, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. For more information, see the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>).

Reading Schedule

Week One: The Trial

Meeting One: Course Introduction and Xenophon’s *Apology*

Meeting Two: Plato’s *Euthyphro*

Meeting Three: Plato’s *Apology*

Week Two: The Aftermath

Meeting Four: Plato’s *Crito*

Meeting Five: Plato’s *Phaedo*

Meeting Six: Selections from Plato’s *Protagoras* & Assignment of Roles/Getting into Character

Week Three: Reenactment

Meeting Seven: The Indictment Phase

Meeting Eight: The Sentencing Phase