

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
PHIL 6310/4400: PLATO

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The *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* are among Plato's most important dialogues both individually and as a group. The *Theaetetus* includes the first discussion of knowledge as justified true belief; the *Sophist* explores the possibility of falsity and the concept of Being (cf. Heidegger's commentary); and the *Statesman* introduces the concept of the golden mean. As a group they follow the *Parmenides*, in which a young Socrates explains his theory of forms to Parmenides, who apparently demolishes it with a series of refutations. The significance of this, and the way the trilogy responds to it, is a major issue for understanding Plato's philosophy as a whole. The course will examine the three dialogues through a mixture of lectures and seminars. Regular attendance is important in seminar courses to ensure an adequate audience and to create continuity of discussion. Students who don't attend regularly will be assigned a final exam. Text: Plato, *Complete Works*, Hackett ISBN: 0-87220-349-2

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Two exegetical seminars or essays, depending on enrolment. They should give an exposition and interpretation of the assigned section, and make reference to the secondary scholarship on reserve at the library. **See additional guidelines on the reverse.**

Seminar Topics

1. Jan 11 Lecture: Introduction, *The Parmenides* 126a-136a, *Theaetetus* 142a-151d
2. 18 *Theaetetus* seminars: 151d-168c (knowledge as perception)
3. 25 168c-186e (Socrates' refutation)
4. Feb 1 187a-200d (knowledge as true judgement)
5. 8 201c-end (knowledge as true judgement + logos)
6. 15 Lecture: *Sophist* 216a-231e (first six definitions)
- \*\*\*\*\* WINTER BREAK \*\*\*\*\*
7. Mar 1 *Sophist* seminars: 232a-245e (problem of falsity and reality)
8. 8 245e-253b (materialism and the forms)
9. 15 253b-end (resolution of the problem)
10. 22 *Statesman* seminars: 257a-268d (development of the problem)
11. 29 268d-289d (myth and discussion)
12. Apr 5 289d-end (final definition)

## SUGGESTIONS FOR SEMINARS

- 1) Approach it philosophically rather than historically. Take what Plato says as seriously as if it were written today.
- 2) The exegesis includes discussing any problems you notice, but if you see a problem don't assume Plato was unaware of it. Consider whether an answer may be implicit in the text.
- 3) Given the usual amount of class discussion, about 25 double-spaced pages should be about right. There's no need to limit yourself if you have more to discuss. If time is running out I'll ask you to prioritize what you still want to say.
- 4) At first focus only on the text and work out your own ideas. You can always modify them if necessary after you read the secondary sources. But if you read the secondary sources first there's a danger of coming to the text with an interpretation already in mind, which could prevent you from making your own discoveries.
- 5) One of the secondary sources you'll be reading is my own book, but don't treat it with any more diffidence than any other secondary source. I won't be offended if you see things differently than I do as long as you've considered my reasons.

**For PHIL 6310: seminar preparation should include the relevant sections of all three commentaries on the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, and three of the four on the *Statesman*, as well as the relevant section of mine.**

**For PHIL 4400: seminar preparation should include the relevant sections of any two of the commentaries on each dialogue, as well as the relevant section of mine.**

## BOOKS ON RESERVE

(Titles marked with an asterisk are optional reading for seminars)

### About all three dialogues

Kenneth Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues* [B 398.F57 D67]

\*Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful* (translation and commentary) [B358 B46]

\*Paul Friedlander, *Plato Vol. 3* [B395 F753 1964 V.3]

\*W.K.C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 5 [B171 G23 V5]

### Theaetetus

Timothy Chappell, *Reading Plato's Theaetetus* [B386 .C43]

David Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: text and subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* [B386 .S43]

Paul Stern, *Knowledge and politics in Plato's Theaetetus* [B386 .S79 2008]

### Sophist

Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* [B384 .H4513]

Noburu Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist* [B384 .N68 1999]

Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Sophist* [B384 R67]

### Statesman

Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Statesman : the web of politics* [JC 71.P62 R67]

Kenneth Sayre, *Metaphysics and Method in Plato's Statesman* [JC71.P314 S295 2006]

Melissa Lane, *Method and politics in Plato's Statesman* [JC71.P314 L36 1998]

Mitchell Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* [JC 71 P314 M54]

**Comment [k1]:** Eric Voegelin, *Plato (Statesman)* [B395 V6] (optional)  
A.E. Taylor, *Plato: The Sophist and the Statesman* [B384 A5 T3] (optional)  
A.E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and his Work* [B395 T25] (all three) (optional)  
W.G. Runciman, *Plato's Later Epistemology* [B398 K7 R8] (first two)  
Kenneth Sayre, *Plato's Analytic Method* [B398 A6 S28]  
Ronald Polansky, *Philosophy and knowledge : a commentary on Plato's Theaetetus* [B386 .P64]  
F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* [B386 A5 C6 1935]  
J.B. Skemp, *Plato's Statesman* [JC 71 P3132]

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\* Optional.