

Western Philosophy & Pre-Rhetoric II Syllabus
2019-2018
Dr. Buhler / Mr. Johnson
kbuhler@trinityclassicalacademy.com

Requirements:

1. Plato, *Republic*
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
3. The Holy Bible, *ESV Study Bible*
4. A three ring binder devoted exclusively to this class with appropriate dividers

Course Description:

This course is intended to cultivate students' ability to argue well in conversation and in writing. More deeply, this course is intended to invite students into intellectual maturity by stoking their love of truth and fostering the joy of dialogue.

Students will gain an appreciation and understanding of the vocabulary, concepts, problems, and relevance of a subset of the Great Ideas in the history of western philosophy.

Students will acquire and practice this knowledge through close readings of Plato, Aristotle, and other primary sources. Students will form their own thoughts by arguing in conversation and in writing.

This course also reviews all prior stages of the Progymnasmata and covers the last stage: Thesis and Law. Students will learn to state a thesis/law clearly, provide arguments in its support, and state objections or counterarguments, and then respond to reasonable objections to their own thesis.

Humanities is a discipline based upon the manipulation of abstract ideas as much as on the learning of concrete facts. As a result, humanities coursework and homework consists primarily in in-class discussion, or assigned reading and writing.

Learning Goals:

- To become familiar with the basic vocabulary of western philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, cosmology, etc.)
- To understand Plato, Aristotle, and other seminal philosophers in their historical context and as thinkers relevant for us today

- To review the Progymnasmata stages of fable, narrative, chreia/maxim, refutation/confirmation, and encomium/invective.
- To introduce the final stage of the Progymnasmata: Thesis/Law
- To identify arguments for and against major positions in ethics, politics, metaphysics, and epistemology
- To practice conversational inquiry (dialectic) into abstract topics as well as one's own life
- To understand, test, and defend the Christian worldview applied to God, man, the universe, right and wrong, and human communities
- To become more virtuous and wise by pursuing truth and goodness

Scope, Sequence:

This course is divided into two semesters – one on Aristotle and one on Plato. Each semester is framed with discussions about the challenge and privilege of being Christians who are called to live the life of the mind.

Grades:

Student work in each unit consists of reading, discussion, and assessments. Therefore, the best way to earn an 'A' is to read carefully, participate, and write.

You will be graded primarily on reading, participation, and tests.

Assessment category	%
Participation	30%
Papers	30%
Note checks	15%
Quizzes	15%
Symposium	10%

Participation Rubric:

One of the primary goals of this class is to improve in the skill of intellectual dialogue in a group. Such discussion is necessary because (1) You must take responsibility for your own learning, (2) discussion helps us to get to know each other, and (3) most people learn and retain material better in discussion.

To earn participation points, you will *voluntarily* share your thoughts in discussion *at least once per week* and respond when called upon. *You are responsible to talk in class.* Even if you are confused, tired, or unmotivated, I expect you to make yourself participate and engage. Get out of your comfort zone into your growth zone. *Come prepared.* Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others' viewpoints, and critique theirs.

Everyone starts at an 80% participation grade for the week and earns a higher or lower grade based on performance. Outstanding participation is marked by preparation, diligence, atten-

tiveness, articulateness, insight, and respect. You will move up or down depending on whether you pay attention and speak at least once per week. Other discussion ground rules are posted online.

Daily participation will be scored on a scale of 1-10 (or 10-100). Students are expected to (a) be a contributor and (b) not cause problems in the classroom. Being a contributor

9-10:

Students always take a voluntary and active role in their own learning. They challenge themselves on a daily basis. They consistently demonstrate a genuine desire to learn and share ideas with the teacher and their classmates. They listen actively to others, initiate discussions, ask significant questions, provide creative and thoughtful insight and ideas, and act as leaders within the group. These students are always well prepared to contribute. Their in-class work ethic and faithfulness with homework demonstrates their high regard for learning.

8:

Students consistently take an active role in their own learning. They participate satisfactorily in class discussions and work. They demonstrate preparation and thoughtfulness when prompted to respond with an answer, and are ready to ask questions and offer insight relevant to the work at hand. They listen respectfully and display attentiveness towards others.

7:

Students inconsistently take an active role in their own learning, sharing relevant ideas, asking appropriate questions, and answering thoughtfully. They contribute sparingly to class discussions and work. They may need occasional reminders to stay on task make the most of our class time, and to increase their level of commitment to the course. In class, the work ethic and focus demonstrated generally needs improvement.

6:

Students rarely take an active role in their own learning. They often do not participate and rarely share ideas or ask questions. As a result of being unprepared for or disengaged from class, these students are unable to offer ideas even when called upon. In class, their work ethic and focus is significantly lacking.

1-5:

Students are absent, unprepared, disrespectful, inattentive, or otherwise posing a significant behavioral and/or academic concern in class.

Reading tips:

Read for understanding, not just completion. Read each book or chapter slowly and actively, pausing to ask yourself: What is the main thesis? Is it true? Take notes summarizing the story or

argument of the text and your questions or opinions on that story. Read as slowly as you must in order to read for understanding; you will get faster over time! Also, talk with each other before class: What was the main point of the reading? What was especially confusing? What especially interesting? Come to class with objections, questions, and arguments.

Quizzes:

Short reading quizzes or “pull questions” may be assigned. These assess that you read the assigned text. These are “easy points” if you are diligent in reading. Some days may not have reading quizzes, and some quizzes may not be announced. So always be prepared for a quiz!

Tests/Papers:

Tests and exams will assess how well you have mastered the core material of the class. Tests may consist of short to medium-length papers covering assigned topics or term papers covering a breadth of topics.

Quality Work Guidelines:

Only quality work from students will be accepted. Quality work is clean, clear, properly titled, formatted, and stapled according to the assignment’s specifications. Unless otherwise stated, electronic assignments are to be turned in online and paper assignments are to be hand-written and completed in pencil. When the use of pens is allowed, only black ink will be acceptable.

Late work will not be accepted. In the case of emergencies or absences known ahead of time, contact Dr. Buhler to develop a plan for satisfactory completion of required work. Assignments will be considered on time when they are ready to be turned in at the beginning of class.

Course Outline:

A detailed course outline may be made available in print or online.

Parent / Student Signature (please return this page only)

I have read and understand the above rules and responsibilities. By signing this document, I agree to abide by the expectations above and to make a positive contribution to this class.

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date