

## Learning Guide Unit 4

## Reading Assignment

**Plato's Republic:** Because it is so broadly written, *The Republic* can be read from many perspectives: as a thesis on political theory and practice, as a tutorial handbook, or as book defining and defending ethics. In this Unit, we are going to look at it from a Societal point of view.

For Plato, the individual is more important than society. A *good society* is formed based on meeting the needs and values of the people living within it. For Plato, contrary to the title of his work, a Monarchy was the ideal form of government. He felt that a peerless leader (king) who could rule with perfect justice was the perfect form of government. That said, he also felt it wasn't reasonable to expect, so writes that the *republic* is the most wholesome form and, basically, the next best thing.

Burnyeat, M.F. (1997). Culture and Society in Plato's Republic. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values. Harvard University. Available at <https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/resources/documents/a-to-z/b/Burnyeat99.pdf>

- Read the entire section in *Culture and Society in Plato's Republic* called "A Tale of Two Cities" starting on page 228 through page 236.
- Take notes about the interplay within the text between Socrates and Glaucon. In this writing, Aristotle is using Socrates and Glaucon as two opposing ideas about ethics and society to present his argument about which viewpoint is fair and just.

Levin, M. (2012). *Ameritopia: The Unmaking of America*. NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc.

- Now read the free online excerpt from Mark Levin's *Ameritopia*, Chapter 2 page 23-36.
- This *opinion* piece, by a sometimes controversial American radio personality, may give you an easier-to-understand perspective on Plato's thoughts in *The Republic*. Mr. Levin gives a rather frank and pointed viewpoint of how Plato addresses the family unit as part of society. Think about this as you form your thoughts for your written assignment. A good philosopher knows that you do have to agree with someone to appreciate their approach to explaining a concept.

Watch the TED-Ed talk on Plato's Allegory of the Cave (Book VII in *The Republic*): Gendler, A. (2015). Plato's Allegory of the Cave. [Video File]. Ted-Ed. Available at



- Prepare to discuss the challenge of teaching to those resistant to conflicting information.
- You will be asked to use your knowledge of research and the internet to find and paste another link explaining the Allegory of the Cave to your peers during the Discussion Forum.

Zarri, J. (1948). Aristotle's Theory of the Origin of State. Oxbridge Essays. Available at <http://www.scholararity.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Aristotles-Theory-of-the-Origin-of-the-State-DRAFT-2-PDF.pdf>

- Zarri (1948) feels that Aristotle's view of The State is superior to Plato's. In your written assignment, you will be asked to define your own view of social philosophy. Use your research skills to find other theories (for or against Aristotle and Plato) to be prepared to present them in your writing.

**Saint Thomas Aquinas:** You are probably familiar with St. Thomas Aquinas for the teachings he espoused about education and reason. Thomism came from him; a belief that all reason comes from God. He was a quite the scholar of his time, and a whole class could be based around his remarkable (and controversial) life. In this class, we are bracketed to talk about St. Thomas and his view of *The State*, however.

Go to the website for the *Constitutional Rights Foundation* and read about St. Thomas Aquinas and *Natural Law and Common Good* (it is also a good review for the Aristotle reading). Available at <http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-22-4-c-st-thomas-aquinas-natural-law-and-the-common-good>

\*For further optional reading about St. Thomas, try "The Condemnation of 1277" where he was condemned by a Bishop of The Church for having radical teachings, only to be canonized in 1323, 50 years after his death, and thus declared by Pope John XXII, to be perfect (and by extension his thoughts were).

- Be prepared to employ what you've read here in the Discussion Forum, your Written Assignment, and the appropriate tests and quizzes.